

Jefferson County Marine Resources Committee
2023 Voluntary Eelgrass and Shellfish Protection No-Anchor Zones
Project Summary Report

Project Overview

The Jefferson County MRC maintains three buoy fields that protect eelgrass and shellfish habitats by encouraging boaters to anchor outside of these areas to prevent anchor and chain damage:

- Port Townsend waterfront (Port Townsend Bay) – thirteen buoys are permitted for protecting eelgrass here, with eight buoys installed in 2004 and five added in 2015.
- Port Hadlock (South Port Townsend Bay) – four buoys are permitted and were installed in 2014 to keep boats from anchoring too close to shellfish beds.
- Mystery Bay – seven buoys are permitted and were installed in 2010 to help limit the number of boats anchored near commercial and Tribal shellfish beds, with five buoys marking the voluntary shellfish protection area and two marking the seaward limits of the Mystery Bay State Park area where boats can anchor.

The weather conditions stay relatively calm in Mystery Bay and near Port Hadlock, so buoys here are left in place all year round and are periodically serviced to remove marine growth and replace underwater hardware. The Port Townsend waterfront buoys experience significantly more wave and wind action in the winter months, so the MRC pulls the large spar buoys out in the fall and replaces them with floats that do not exert as much pull on the anchors. The MRC No-Anchor Zones Subcommittee monitors the buoy fields periodically throughout the year to ensure that the buoys are in place and functioning properly, as well as to assess boater compliance with the no-anchor zones.

Project Lead: Troy McKelvey

Subcommittee Members: Gordon King, Bryan DeCaterina, Nam Siu, Brenda Johnson, Sarah Fischen

October 2022 – September 2023 No-Anchor Zone Project Activities

November 19 – The dive team (Gordon, Bryan, Troy) swapped eleven summer spar buoys with winter floats along the Port Townsend waterfront.

February 11 – The dive team (Gordon, Bryan, Troy) worked on maintenance of the Mystery Bay buoy field, cleaning spar buoys and replacing them where missing.

March 25 – Two MRC members, Gordon and Troy, and the MRC Coordinator had a work party to remove old labels peeling off spar buoys and replacing them with new labels.

May 6 – Two MRC members, Gordon and Troy, worked from the boat to swap some of the winter floats with summer spar buoys along the Port Townsend waterfront.

May 11 – Two MRC members, Gordon and Troy, attended the Salish Sea No-Anchor Zones Workgroup meeting with other organizations working on eelgrass protection across the region.

May 13 – The dive team (Gordon, Bryan, Troy) finished swapping the floats with buoys along the Port Townsend waterfront and replaced hardware as needed.

July 13 – The project lead, Troy, attended the Salish Sea No-Anchor Zones Workgroup meeting.

August 22 – The MRC Coordinator retrieved a Port Townsend eelgrass protection buoy from a Coupeville resident.

August 29 – MRC member, Nam Siu, reported possibly seeing a Port Townsend eelgrass protection buoy floating on the water as he was traveling on the ferry.

September 24 – Two MRC members, Gordon and Troy, worked from the boat, lended by Taylor Shellfish, to swap nine summer spar buoys with of the winter floats along the Port Townsend waterfront.

Additional monitoring activities and dates are detailed below in the Buoy Maintenance and Boater Compliance Summaries. **MRC members contributed a total of 61.5 volunteer hours to** the Voluntary No-Anchor Zones project.

Buoy Maintenance Summary

MRC volunteers who are highly skilled certified divers have in large part maintained the no-anchor zone buoys since 2004, when the first set of buoys were installed along the Port Townsend waterfront.

Condition of Buoy Fields: Port Townsend

The dive team swapped the summer spar buoys with winter floats on November 19 and back on May 6 and 13, setting up 11 (of the 13 permitted) spar buoys ahead of the busy summer boating season. Gordon and Troy swapped the buoys back again on September 24, working from a boat, for the 2023-2024 winter season, replacing only nine buoys with winter floats. On August 22, the MRC Coordinator retrieved one buoy that had floated onto the property of a Coupeville resident, and the second missing buoy is likely to be one that MRC member, Nam Siu, observed floating while riding the ferry on August 29 (see Figure 1). On their next dive, the team plans to swap out metal hardware with non-metal parts to prevent erosion and loss of buoys.

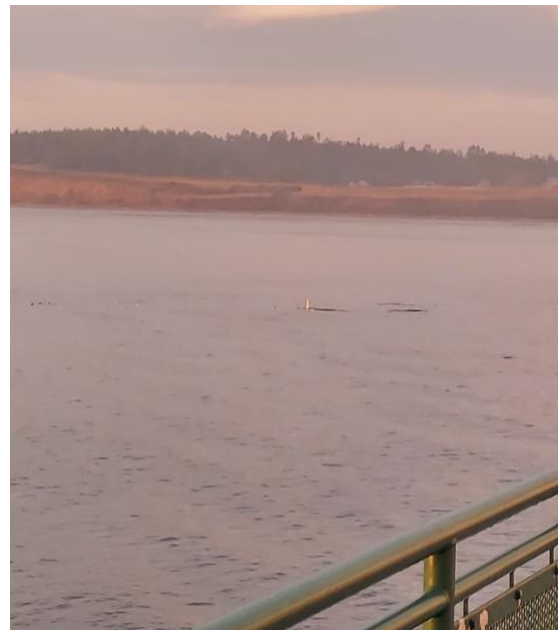


Figure 1. Photo of a possible floating eelgrass protection buoy from Port Townsend, sent from MRC member, Nam Siu, from the Port Townsend-Coupeville ferry on August 29.

Condition of Buoy Fields: Port Hadlock

The team did not service the Port Hadlock buoy field this year. These buoys will need to be checked for maintenance needs, and will likely require removal of marine growth, in the coming year.

Condition of Buoy Fields: Mystery Bay

On February 11, the dive team (Gordon, Bryan, Troy) worked on cleaning marine growth off the still intact buoys and replaced missing buoys to get all five voluntary no-anchor zone buoys in working order. The two state park boundary buoys still need to be installed, as both appear to be missing.

Boater Compliance Summary

Port Townsend

One MRC member, Frank, diligently monitored the Port Townsend buoy field between October 8 and September 22, with a total of 26 monitoring days recorded. Frank typically monitored from the viewpoint near Better Living Through Coffee, with a couple of observations taken from viewpoints near Adams Street Park and the NW Maritime Center dock, and typically in the mornings, with a few monitoring times recorded in the late afternoon (see Table 1). See a sample of Frank's photos documenting compliant boaters in Figure 2.



Figure 2. A sample of photos taken by MRC member, Frank, documenting vessel compliance with the Port Townsend No-Anchor Zone (buoys identified with yellow circles).

Two additional monitoring efforts were recorded by MRC members, Sarah, on 9/9/2023 and Neil and Brent on 9/10/2023 during the Wooden Boat Festival, bringing the total to 28 monitoring days. On 9/9/2023, Sarah noted a yellow catamaran anchored within the no-anchor zone near Better Living Through Coffee. Upon closer observation, Frank reported that the boat was instead anchored high up the shore, seeming to not disturb the nearshore vegetation (see Figure 3). See monitoring photos taken by Brent on 9/10/2023 in Figures 4-6 and vessel count data sheets attached at the end of this report. No boats were observed to be anchored within the boundaries of the buoys, even during the Wooden Boat Festival which attracts hundreds of boats and thousands of visitors to Port Townsend Bay. This resulted in 100% boater compliance with the Port Townsend eelgrass protection no-anchor zone this year.



Figure 3. Catamaran appearing to be anchored within the Port Townsend No-Anchor Zone (buoy circled in yellow), but with its anchor placed high up on the shore.



Figure 4. Photo of anchored vessels in compliance with the eelgrass protection no-anchor zone (buoys circled in yellow) during the Wooden Boat Festival (9/10/2023), by Brent Vadopalas.



Figure 5. Photo of anchored vessels in compliance with the eelgrass protection no-anchor zone (buoy circled in yellow) during the Wooden Boat Festival (9/10/2023), by Brent Vadopalas.



Figure 6. Photo of Neil (third from left) monitoring no-anchor zone vessel compliance during the Wooden Boat Festival (9/10/2023), by Brent Vadopalas.

Table 1: October 2022 – September 2023 results of monitoring boater compliance at the Port Townsend eelgrass protection no-anchor zone.

Date	Time	Monitor	Number of Vessels Anchored Inside the No-Anchor Zone
10/8/2022	9:58am	Frank	0
10/9/2022	9:30am	Frank	0
10/19/2022	9:43am	Frank	0
10/20/2022	9:40am	Frank	0
5/7/2023	1:01pm	Frank	0
5/19/2023	8:52am	Frank	0
5/21/2023	10:30am	Frank	0

5/24/2023	10:25am	Frank	0
5/26/2023	9:05am	Frank	0
5/29/2023	10:52am	Frank	0
*6/7/2023	9:46am	Frank	0
6/25/2023	11:05am	Frank	0
6/29/2023	10:04am	Frank	0
7/7/2023	9:10am	Frank	0
7/18/2023	8:17am	Frank	0
7/18/2023	10:30am	Frank	0
7/21/2023	9:30am	Frank	0
8/2/2023	10:46am	Frank	0
8/4/2023	10:37am	Frank	0
**8/12/2023	11:50am	Frank	0
*9/2/2023	5:45pm	Frank	0
9/6/2023	9:05am	Frank	0
9/9/2023	7:29am	Frank	0
***9/9/2023	-	Sarah	0
9/10/2023	9:10am	Frank	0
***9/10/2023	11:30am	Neil & Brent	0
9/13/2023	9:15am	Frank	0
9/22/2023	3:33pm	Frank	0

0 vessels anchored within the Port Townsend No-Anchor Zone = 100% compliance

*Monitoring location near Adams Street Park

**Monitoring location near Port Townsend Vineyards

***Monitoring location near NW Maritime Center dock

Port Hadlock

This site was not monitored for boater compliance this year.

Mystery Bay

This site was monitored on 5/21/2023 by former MRC member, Dale Moses, noting “I kayaked Mystery Bay this week and was pleased to see all five of the MRC buoys were intact and floating well.” Dale noted the two state park buoys that still need to be replaced and that the SW no-anchor zone buoy needs the “If lost, call...” sticker to be replaced.