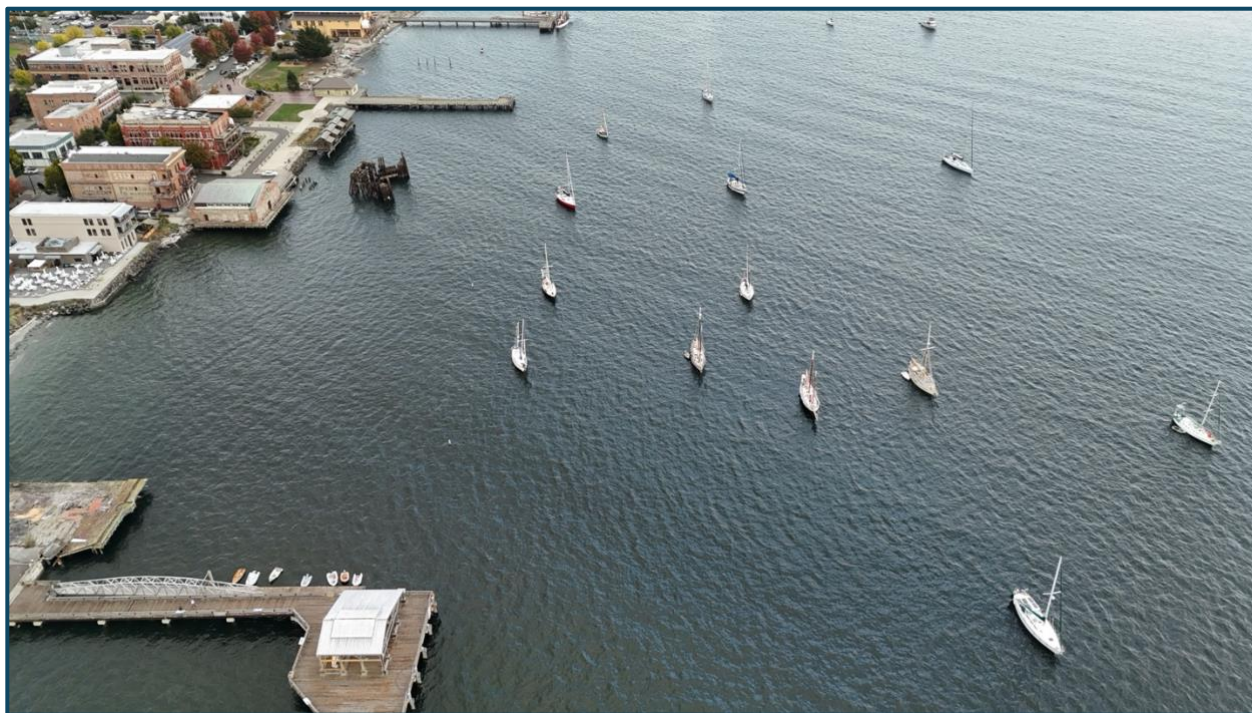


Project Summary Report

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones



Project Reporting Period (October 2025 – September 2026)

Grant number: SEANWS-2025-JeCoWS-00013

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1. Abstract

The Jefferson County MRC has three buoy fields that protect eelgrass/submerged aquatic vegetation and shellfish habitats. The buoy fields encourage boaters to anchor outside of these areas to prevent anchor chain damage and pollutants from anchored vessels being released in sensitive area.

- Port Townsend waterfront (Port Townsend Bay) – 13 buoys have been permitted for protecting eelgrass here, with 8 buoys installed in 2004, and 5 added in 2015. There are currently 11 buoys installed along the Port Townsend waterfront.

The Port Townsend waterfront buoys experience significantly more wave and wind action in the winter months, so the MRC usually pulls the large (~66 pound) spar buoys out in the fall and replaces them with floats that do not exert as much pull on the anchors. During removal the buoys are serviced to remove marine growth. The buoys were left in last winter.

- Port Hadlock (South Port Townsend Bay) – 4 buoys were installed in 2014 to keep boats from anchoring too close to shellfish beds.
- Mystery Bay – 7 buoys were installed in 2010 to help limit the number of boats anchored near commercial and Tribal shellfish beds, with 5 buoys specifically marking the voluntary shellfish protection area.

The weather conditions stay relatively calm near Port Hadlock and in Mystery Bay, so buoys here are left in place all year round and are periodically serviced to remove marine growth and replace underwater hardware.

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, and to assess boater compliance and effectiveness of the no-anchor zones. Two maintenance trips were conducted this year, one day for the Port Townsend waterfront buoys, and a second day for the Port Hadlock and Mystery Bay buoys.

2. Project Goals

The ultimate goal of most of our MRC projects is to have a functional healthy marine ecosystem. For this project we are trying to move the needle in a positive direction by providing visual messaging in the form of “no-anchor” spar buoys that indicate the boundary of sensitive marine benthos that benefits from not being degraded by anchors and chain or boat discharge and a very clear message to anchor past the buoys.

3. Project Engagement

3.1. Partners/Organizations

Partners include Taylor Shellfish, who donated boat use, fuel, truck and trailer.

3.2. Participants

Project Lead: Gordon King

Subcommittee Members: Troy McKelvey, Bryan DeCaterina, Frank Handler

Volunteers: Brad Bebout

3.3. Named community(ies) involved

The NAZ team participated in a panel at the Global Earth Repair Convergence and gave one presentation this year at the 2026 Wooden Boat Festival, connecting with members of the public interested in environmental stewardship and local conservation actions. They also receive updates on buoy status from several community members across Marrowstone Island, Port Hadlock, and Port of PT.

4. Project Methods/Actions

Project Activity Summary	Date or Period	Location(s)
In late February we received a call from the Port of Port Townsend, about a NAZ buoy that had floated into the marina. They pulled it onto the dock for us, and Bryan DeCaterina picked it up. Project goal met: Maintenance	February 25 th , 2026	Point Hudson, Port Townsend
Using Taylor Shellfish's truck and boat the Jefferson County NAZ team of Bryan DeCatarina, Troy McLevey and Gordon King launched at the Port of Port Townsend Marina and serviced the PT waterfront buoys. Buoys were scraped and a screw anchor to the SE of the marina replaced. We actually had the recovered spar buoy which looked to have been	April 17 th , 2026	Port Townsend Waterfront

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cut. The buoy was replaced. We also attempted to add a new screw anchor just to the SE of the WSF dock. After more than of 20 minutes of attempting to get the anchor to screw in it was abandoned as being too rocky. Project goal met: Maintenance		
Panel appearance by Gordon King at the Global Earth Repair Convergence Project goal met: Education and Outreach	May 7-11, 2026	Fort Worden, Port Townsend
Waggoner article titled “Protecting Eelgrass Meadows at Port Townsend.” This article was developed as a joint effort by the NWSC and Gordon King, Troy McKelvey, and Katie Kowal. Project goal met: Education and Outreach	August -September 2026	Port Townsend
Using Taylor Shellfish’s truck and boat the Jefferson County NAZ team of Bryan DeCatarina, Troy McLevey and Gordon King took the boat to Mystery Bay and inspected and cleaned the five anchor-out spar buoys. Following that we proceeded to Port Hadlock and cleaned the NAZ buoys there also. Project goal met: Maintenance	August 8 th , 2026	Port Hadlock and Mystery Bay
“Protecting Vital Eelgrass Habitat Through No Anchor Zones” presentation by Gordon King and Bryan DeCaterina at the 2026 Wooden Boat Festival’s Marine Science and Stewardship Stage Project goal met: Education and Outreach	September 11, 2026	Port Townsend
Support for WA DOH Mystery Bay Management Plan update Project goal met: Environmental Stewardship	Ongoing	Mystery Bay

5. Results

5.1. Data Summary

Boater Compliance Monitoring

From April through October, MRC members participate in boater compliance monitoring. Members will visit a site, note whether boaters are in or out of compliance based on where they are anchored in relation to the No-Anchor Zone buoys, and take a photo as documentation. During this project period, 13 observations were made, and found 100% compliance (Table 1).

Table 1. Boater compliance observations taken June – August 2026.

Date (2026)	Location	Sampler	Compliance (Y/N)
6/4	*BLTC	Frank	Y
6/5	*BLTC	Gordon	Y
6/7	*BLTC	Frank	Y
6/12	*BLTC	Frank	Y
6/27	*BLTC	Frank	Y
7/19	*BLTC	Frank	Y
7/24	*BLTC	Frank	Y
8/6	*BLTC	Frank	Y
8/7	Mill	Gordon	Y
8/13	*BLTC	Frank	Y
8/14	Adams St. Park	Frank	Y
8/16	*BLTC	Frank	Y
8/23	*BLTC	Frank	Y

*BLTC – Better Living Through Coffee

September 10th-13th, 2026 – Wooden Boat Festival Boater Compliance Monitoring

During the Wooden Boat Festival (WBF), there is a large influx of dozens of vessels along the Port Townsend Waterfront. This year, 13 monitoring observations were taken over a 6-day period, including on the ground visual surveys and photos at random locations, and both a visual on the ground count and drone flight along the entirety of the Port Townsend waterfront.

Most observations showed anchored boats were in compliance with the No-Anchor Zones, however one observation on 9/11/2026 and two observations on 9/12/2026 showed 4 boats were anchored inside the buoy line (Table 2). Observations were not collected on 9/13/2026.

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Table 2. Boater compliance observations taken during Wooden Boat Festival

Date (2026)	Time	Location	Sampler	Observation Type	Observation Notes	Compliance (Y/N)
9/9	NR	PT Waterfront	Gordon	Visual survey		Y
9/10	NR	PT Waterfront	Gordon	Photo x 4	4 locations ¹	Y
9/11	NR	PT Waterfront	Sarah	Visual Survey	1 Catamaran	Y
9/11	8am	*BLTC	Frank	Photo x 2		Y
9/11	8am	Adams St. Park	Frank	Photo x 3		Y
9/11	12pm	PT Waterfront	Gordon	Photo x 4	4 locations ²	N
9/12	NR	PT Waterfront	Bryan	Drone	Video and photos of waterfront ³	N
9/12	7am	*BLTC	Frank	Photo x 1		Y
9/12	10am	Adams St. Park	Frank	Photo x 4	Catamaran ⁴	Y
9/12	8am	SE of Maritime Center	Gordon	Visual survey	1 location ⁵	N
9/12	12pm	Mill to Pt. Hudson	Gordon	Visual count	97 boats ⁶	Y
9/12	5pm	PT Waterfront	Gordon	Photo x 2	2 locations ⁷	Y
9/14	9am	*BLTC	Frank	Photo x 2		Y

*BLTC – Better Living Through Coffee

¹ I observed the PT waterfront again this afternoon and there are still no boats anchored inside our NAZ buoys.

² Today unfortunately I counted 4 boats inside the NAZ Buoys. Towards the Pt Hudson end.

³ During the drone flight the full length of the waterfront, several boats were over the line.

⁴ Catamaran anchored ashore. I see no violations.

⁵ I saw 3 or 4 anchored inside the spar buoys just SE of the Maritime center.

⁶ I counted anchored boats from the mill to Pt. Hudson and got 97, with none anchored within the NAZ buoys. There is a catamaran over the eelgrass, but it has a bow shore anchor and a stern anchor that appears to be beyond the NAZ buoy.

⁷ No boats inside the NAZ buoys this afternoon.

5.2. Outcomes

Project outcomes include well maintained buoys at three sites. Buoys are present and clearly marked and visible, and based on the majority of the MRC's boater compliance observations, seem to encourage boaters to anchor outside of the No-Anchor Zones. Since we regularly see boaters anchored outside, we presume that the buoy fields are having a positive impact on protecting the eelgrass and shellfish beds along the shoreline. An unplanned project outcome included increased outreach and education on the history and purpose of the No-Anchor Zones. This was achieved through a magazine article published in the Waggoner (Appendix A), a panel appearance at the Global Earth Repair Convergence, and a presentation given to the general public at the 2026 Wooden Boat Festival (Appendix B).

5.3. Outputs

- 2 maintenance events, servicing all 22 buoys across 3 buoy fields over two days
- 26 total boater compliance observations
- 100% boater compliance observed from June to August 2026
- A visual count of boater compliance on Saturday, September 12 showed 97 boats anchored from the Port Townsend Paper Mill to Point Hudson, all in compliance with the No-Anchor Zone boundary
- 6 MRC members and 1 volunteer participated in maintenance and observation activities across 20 days
- 1 magazine article written, 1 panel participation, and 1 presentation given on the No-Anchor Zone project

5.4. Results in context

We have been able to keep the large buoys in place especially during times of high boat usage in the area. Monitoring has shown that boats rarely come inside the NAZ buoys. This is a strong indicator that we are achieving what we set out to do.

6. Project Highlights, Innovations & Stories

One MRC member, Rebecca Berger, captured several photos showing one of the creative ways the eelgrass buoy outside the Port Townsend Boat Haven has been used by a well-known Bigg's orca, T49A1 Noah. The photos below show him circling near the buoys, and in a video she captured at the same time, the orca can be seen dipping under the water, then pulling the buoy under with it. It's suspected the orca was using the chain as a scratching post, but it's unclear whether the behavior was play, scratching, or something else.



Date: June 2026
Location: Boat Haven,
Port Townsend, WA
Photographer credit:
Rebecca Berger



Caption:
Bigg's orca T49A1 Noah
interacts with one of the
Jefferson MRC's No-
Anchor Zone buoys,
repeatedly pulling it
underwater. It's
supposed this behavior
may be play, scratching
an itch on the anchor
chain, or some
combination of the two!

7. Lessons Learned

In preparing information for the Waggoner article, we learned that there was a duplicate GPS coordinate listed in our records for the Port Townsend Waterfront buoy field, and in turn a coordinate missing. We will plan to confirm coordinates next spring, and update both the MRC's and DNR's records.

8. Next Steps

In the next year, the No-Anchor Zone subcommittee will continue to monitor boater compliance and perform regular maintenance at all three buoy fields. It is our goal to ensure regular and consistent compliance monitoring, and we will work to develop or adopt new tools/schedules to accomplish this. We also plan to confirm GPS coordinates for the currently installed buoys and correct any mislabeled coordinates. During the coordinate check we also plan to label each buoy with an individual number (vinyl sticker), to make tracking buoy locations easier. We are also permitted to install a new buoy along the Port Townsend Waterfront, near the Ferry landing, and may do this in spring 2027.

Images



Date:4/17/2026

Location: Port Townsend Waterfront – Port Townsend, WA

Photographer credit: Troy McKelvey

Caption: Gordon King and Bryan DeCaterina prepare to dive on the No-Anchor Zone buoys along the Port Townsend Waterfront, to check the underwater hardware is in good condition and provide any needed maintenance.



Date: 4/17/2026

Location: Port Townsend Waterfront – Port Townsend, WA

Photographer credit: Troy McKelvey

Caption: The NAZ team heads out to service the buoys along the Port Townsend Waterfront, and replace a buoy (white cylinder in photo) that came loose a few months before.

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Date: 8/8/2026

Location: South Port Townsend Bay – Port Hadlock, WA

Photographer credit: Troy McKelvey

Caption: Gordon King and Bryan DeCaterina gear up to pull No-Anchor Zone buoys for maintenance. They will pull the buoys out of the water, scrape off any epibiota such as algae and barnacles, and place the buoys back in the water.



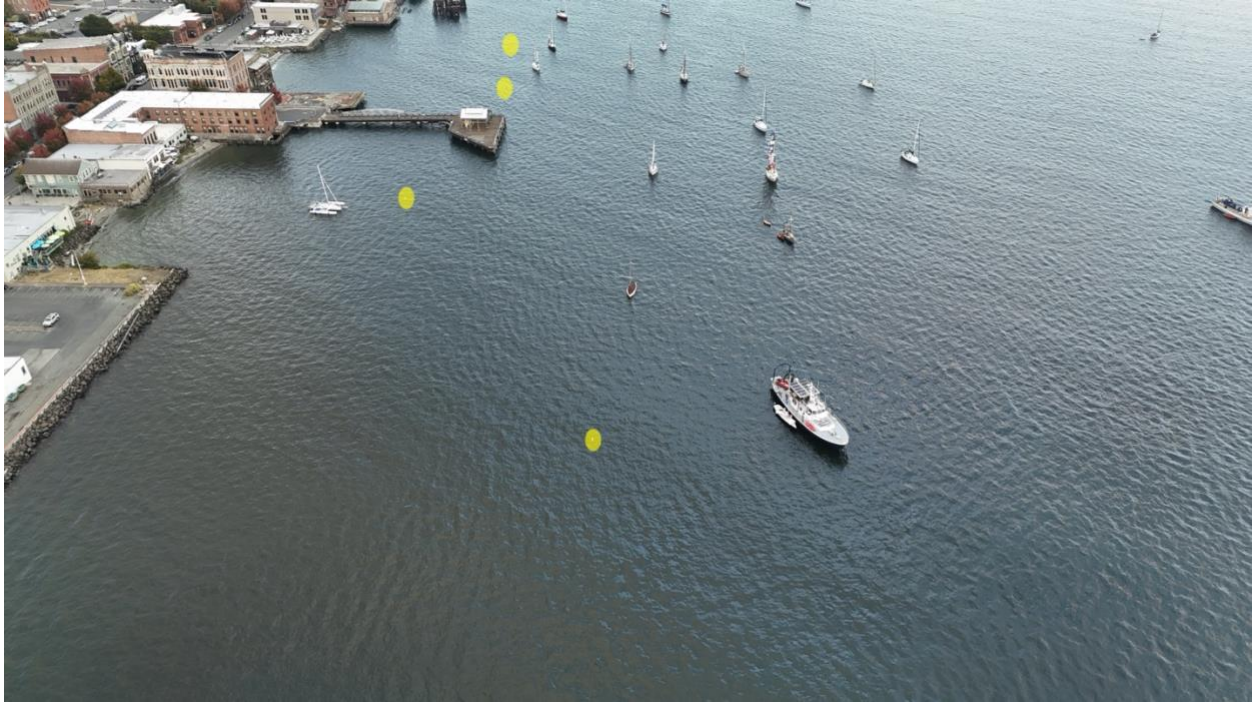
Date: 9/11/2026

Location: Port Townsend Waterfront – Port Townsend, WA

Photographer credit: Bryan DeCaterina

Caption: Bryan DeCaterina flew a drone over the Port Townsend Waterfront, capturing video and photo's to evaluate boater compliance in the No-Anchor Zone. While he counted 4 boats out of compliance, the significant majority of boats were anchored outside of the No-Anchor Zone.

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Date: 9/11/2026

Location: Port Townsend Waterfront – Port Townsend, WA

Photographer credit: Bryan DeCaterina

Caption: Bryan DeCaterina flew a drone over the Port Townsend Waterfront, capturing video and photo's to evaluate boater compliance in the No-Anchor Zone. The buoys demarcating the start of the No-Anchor Zone are highlighted in yellow, and show with one exception, all boaters are in compliance of anchoring outside of the protection zone.

Appendix A: NAZ presentation for Wooden Boat Festival (first slide)

Protecting Vital Eelgrass Habitat Through No Anchor Zones

Gordon King & Bryan DeCaterina
of the Jefferson County Marine
Resources Committee



Appendix B: Waggoner Article (first page)

TRENDING: A Christmas Tradition – A One Day Cruise

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PROTECTING EELGRASS MEADOWS AT PORT TOWNSEND

Posted by Waggoner Guest | Aug 29, 2026



Dive into the world of eelgrass meadows with us as we explore boating destinations across Washington and British Columbia. Along the way, we'll hear from local partners who help protect these unique underwater ecosystems. This third article in a series is part of the Anchor Out of Eelgrass Campaign, which encourages boaters to use best anchoring practices to safeguard sensitive eelgrass habitats.



This one-of-a-kind guide has been updated and expanded, covering over 500 marinas and anchor sites, from San Diego to Seattle, with harbor diagrams and more.

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