

# Geoduck Task Force Meeting 3

June 18, 2024 1-4pm

## AGENDA

- I. Introduction and Welcome
- II. Review of TF Purpose and Goals
- III. Report out from Subgroups
  - a. Water Quality subgroup
  - b. Enhancement subgroup
- IV. Review of Technical Memo annotated outline (circulated on 6/13/24)
- V. Harvest Restrictions update and discussion
  - a. Summary of subgroup topics
  - b. Management framework topics
  - c. Discussion of proposed recommendations
    - i. Statutory amendment to the 200-yard rule
    - ii. Provide funding for targeted geoduck surveys
    - iii. Provide funding for research on stock assessment methodology
    - iv. Consideration of flexibility in eelgrass depth restrictions
- VI. Discussion of agendas and deliverables for upcoming task force meetings
- VII. Action items and close out

## ATTENDEES:

Billy Plauché (Plauché and Carr), Amanda Carr (Plauché and Carr), Chris Cziesla (Confluence), Alexis Huynh (Confluence), Phil Bloch (Confluence), Kelly McDonald (Confluence), Alex Gouley (Skokomish Tribe), Abby Barnes (DNR), Blain Reeves (DNR), Chris Eardley (DFW), David Winfrey (Puyallup Tribe), Eddie Kim (Squaxin Island Tribe), Leslie Connelly (Ecology), Megan Russell (Lummi Nation), Sandy Zeiner (Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission), Scott Berbells (DOH), Todd Hass (Puget Sound Partnership), Thomas Gorman (DNR), Viviane Barry (Suquamish Tribe), Austin Paul (Point No Point Treaty Council), Kyle Lentz (Chelsea Farms), Josh Chapman (Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe), Aaron Jones (Tulalip Tribe), Deanna Finley (Puyallup Tribe), Mike McHugh (Tulalip Tribe), Paul Williams (Suquamish Tribe), Aaron Purser (Suquamish Tribe), Franchesca Perez (Stillaguamish Tribe), Margaret Homerding (Nisqually Indian Tribe), Blair Paul (Skokomish Tribe), George Stearns (Puyallup Tribe)

ACTION ITEMS:

- (Facilitation team) Ensure WDFW is on next enhancement group and add topic of WDFW regulations for moving shellfish to enhancement topics list.
- (Task force members) Review the outline and send additional thoughts/comments by 6/28/24.
- (Facilitation team) Develop broader recommendation for show plot use and method.
- (Facilitation team) Develop recommendation to engage academic support in harvest management and co-manager decision-making process.

## SUMMARY:

During this task force meeting, the facilitation team provided an update on the water quality and geoduck population enhancement subgroups, participants discussed the Technical Memo annotated outline that was circulated in advance of the meeting, and task force members delved into topics from the harvest restrictions subgroup. Confluence provided an overview of the water quality priority areas that have been identified to date by the subgroup and sought feedback from the task force on what factors should be considered in developing the prioritization criteria. A copy of the Technical Memo annotated outline was circulated to task force members ahead of the meeting to allow for a discussion of feedback during the meeting. Confluence provided a brief overview of the planned content in each of the memo sections. The in-depth discussion on the harvest restrictions topics and recommendations resulted in further need to refine or broaden proposed recommendations. Suggestions included engaging academia in harvest management conversations, broadening the recommendation related to show plots and show estimates, and removing the proposed recommendation related to eelgrass depth restrictions. The next task force meeting will be focused on geoduck population enhancement topics, though there will be an opportunity to check in and close out discussion on the harvest restrictions topics.

## NOTES:

### **II. Review of TF Purpose and Goals**

- Maintaining sustainability and commitment to human health
- Break work into 3 different categories: water quality, harvest restrictions, and geoduck population enhancement.
- Three deliverables of the geoduck task force:
  - Technical Memo (outline circulated on 6/13 ahead of 6/18 meeting) -- will circulate full draft ahead of next meeting
  - Enhancement Factsheet
  - Ranking Method Memo – discuss prioritization

### **III. Report out from Subgroups**

#### **a. Water Quality subgroup**

- Investigation into nonpoint pollution sources for geoduck tract.
  - Scott Berbells overviewed DOH classification process for areas with a lens of nonpoint source pollution.
  - The facilitation team worked with DOH ahead of the subgroup meeting to identify where nonpoint source pollution resulted in downgrade of classification. Only one site was identified, which is Poverty Bay.
  - Most of the nonpoint source pollution derives from upland sources. Nonpoint pollution tends to be less of an issue further out in subtidal than nearshore intertidal areas.
  - Discussed the role of shellfish protection districts.
  - This is an area identified for investigation at the outset. Still planning to include it in the Tech Memo but will use Poverty Bay as a case study.
- Next subgroup meeting will focus on unclassified areas; nonpoint source pollution will be part of that conversation.

- Priority areas:
  - Confluence compiled a list of priority geoduck tracts related to water quality that have been identified by the subgroup.
  - Most of the tracts primarily have either a point source issue located in a prohibited growing area or are in unclassified growing areas.
  - Table headers for summarizing the final list of water quality priority areas include tract name, tract number, reason for closure, and biomass.
  - Are there other types of information that would be helpful for prioritization to include in the table as additional columns?
- Questions/comments on the water quality subgroup update:
  - Have the prioritization criteria been established?
    - Not yet. Confluence will be looking at what information and data will be important to collect for the prioritization process. Perhaps using a weighted criterion.
    - Biological, geographical criteria, cost of upgrading areas – there is a huge number of different criteria, and it will take a large effort and participation of different parties to work through that.
    - What other datasets are needed to build prioritization criteria?
  - How will this list be used?
    - Using the prioritized list to take to DNR to work in consultation with tribes.
    - Hope that the list adds value as a repository for data. Should another geographic scale be used? Any additional information to refine columns?

**b. Enhancement subgroup**

- DOH shared information on regulations governing geoduck transplanting that applies to all shellfish species. [Chapter 246-282 WAC](#) sets seed size limitations for moving shellfish from one harvest area to another.
- DOH is open to additional conversations to discuss support in navigating through transplanting restrictions and identifying potential pathways.
- The subgroup discussed geoduck aquaculture and triggers, including lessons learned from aquaculture while staying within wildstock enhancement.
- Good conversation around the role of genetics and additional information needed related to genetic considerations, particularly in the hatchery context.
- Questions/comments about enhancement subgroup update:
  - WDFW will have regulations around moving live shellfish. Aimed at ensuring low risk of diseases and pest species. Should make sure we're having those conversations as well as the genetics side.
  - Action item: Ensure WDFW is on next enhancement group and add topic to enhancement topics list.

**IV. Review of Technical Memo annotated outline (circulated on 6/13/24)**

- Confluence provided an overview of the planned content in each of the Technical Memo sections. Information from subgroup meetings will primarily be captured in Section 4.0 (Discussion and Geoduck Tract Inventory: Factors Affecting Harvest Opportunities).

Recommendations in this document are intended to be more focused on general recommendations and the specific corrective actions will be detailed in the Ranking Method Memo.

- The facilitation team is seeking feedback on the Technical Memo to make sure the needs and expectations of the task force are met.
- Questions/comments on the review of the Technical Memo annotated outline:
  - For unclassified areas, what are the areas where folks are interested? How much do we want to focus on the report vs. investigating specific locations as case studies?
  - With Richmond Beach, getting information from WWTP engineers was a big obstacle. In general, if everyone that participates in polluting a region is available, then you'll be able to get that information. The legislature could address this challenge with rules or getting access to engineering schematics.
  - Between various agencies there are distinct areas of focus. DOH is concerned about health implications, Ecology is issuing permits but has a different set of criteria. One of the intents of the Technical Memo is to describe the process so that it's understandable. How is the task force feeling about their understanding of the regulatory drivers?
    - One of the low hanging fruits is sensors and telemetry so that effluent is communicated quickly. Can't imagine that it would be too cost prohibitive to place sensors on outfalls, which in turn would help the assumption of the unreported failures.
    - It would be great to get Ecology to align their requirements with the shellfish world. The Lakota outfall area just had a huge downgrade but is not violating their permit. The level of fecal coliform before secondary treatment is so high that dilution wouldn't achieve standards.
  - Some of the recommendations will be more administrative in nature, other recommendations may be focused on developing larger amount of biomass for harvest. Are these equally important? Should we focus on one more than the other?
  - Action item: Task force members to take a look at the outline, send additional thoughts to work in additional comments by 6/28/24.

## **V. Harvest Restrictions update and discussion**

### **a. Summary of subgroup topics**

- Some topics are more administrative in nature. The 200-yard rule wouldn't change biomass in TAC and would currently only apply to state harvest.
- The subgroup has developed a few targeted strategies to lead to new harvest locations and improving monitoring at existing tracts to make sure we're tracking recovery and opportunity.
- Protection of environmental resources and management framework are ongoing conversations, and some topics may require a co-manager decision-making process.

### **b. Management framework topics**

- One of the goals of the Technical Memo is to explain the framework available and discuss inputs of the framework and document the common understanding.
- How can work from the task force and subgroups add value to the existing process between co-managers? How to help the dialogue further?

- DFW and DNR provided presentations for the current framework and co-managers know these details. Confluence will be summarizing these challenges and opportunities in the Technical Memo. Do participants have ideas on how to help the process?
- (M. McHugh) I would like to have an assessment of the clear-cutting mentality of one agency. Extremely high harvest rates in small areas seem to be an issue that drives stock production down. Seems like we don't have any ability to not ask DNR to take 95% of resource.
  - We've been asking for an upper limit of harvest and have gotten zero traction with DNR. Tulalip stops at 65% exploitation rate. Conversations about equity, tract-by-tract. How do we create more opportunities for everyone? Clear-cutting limits and undermines ecosystem functions. Suggest having an academic look at this because we don't have an agreement. If we need further clarification, that's what the legislature could look at.
  - Harvest management always needs to be examined and improved. It'll take more than this committee to assess this harvest management methodology. Perhaps involving academic, research, and getting third parties to review the harvest management and assess if this is the way we want to continue. There's a lot of pressure to get plans signed, to use existing methodology and to get out and harvest again.
  - (V. Barry) There are many problems with geoduck management and co-management. One of them is to not always agree what the harvest rate should be and how much to harvest within a tract. A tract is subjectively divided by co-managers. 95% is not a rate that is a goal for any party. Has it happened that more than 65% is harvested? Yes. Should look at harvest rates, harvest strategies, and which strategies make more sense. There are as many ideas as there are parties.
    - In terms of recommendations, we need to be careful and getting outside help would be appropriate. Perhaps co-managers have been too close to it for too long.
  - Potential recommendation: Deeper dive with academic support?
  - Would like to hear from DFW on this. Back in the early days, it was an equity issue that the state didn't want the tribes to go around and high grade good tracts, not framed as a biological reason to do the clear-cut method.
    - The state has shown willingness and support for different management approaches, including the South Sound approach mentioned. We should be open to input from outside expertise and academia. DFW would welcome that.
    - DNR doesn't have intention on staying on tract; it's not beneficial. If we do, it's usually by co-manager alignment or the original biomass survey on tract is questionable. Maybe recommendation of academic review of framework but we would defer to DFW. We're a co-manager at this table and if there's a way to get someone else to provide feedback, that would be welcomed.

- (D. Winfrey) I don't feel like there's a good response. Maybe the next negotiation for South Sound geoduck management plan, propose shorter rotation.
  - South Sound is where DFW has advocated for change. With Puyallup, DFW has presented to high level individuals on changes that we wanted to support and move the needle toward more conservative and sustainable approach.
  - Continued effort for this discussion and emphasize urgency of the issue/proposal.
- Two issues: 1) Management framework and options, and 2) higher harvest rate within tract and clear-cutting element.
  - The facilitation team will attempt to draw distinction and come up with a recommendation for future working group.

**c. Discussion of proposed recommendations**

**i. Statutory amendment to the 200-yard rule**

- Proposed language change: "... Vessels conducting harvest operations must remain seaward of eighteen feet below mean lower low water (0.0 ft) or the shallowest edge of the harvest area, whichever is deeper ~~a line two hundred yards seaward from and parallel to the line of ordinary high tide.~~"
- The change would be for state harvesters only. Due to geographic parameters, tribes can harvest, and this would provide ancillary benefits for tribal harvesters by removing restriction for state harvesters.
- There are some concerns with potential use conflicts with shoreline residences. There are existing noise limitations around geoduck harvest generally that could address noise component of the concern.
- Questions/comments about the statutory amendment:
  - There are many tracts that DNR doesn't survey because they're inside the 200-yard. There is biomass that could be put in the rotation that isn't considered. This has some potential for South Sound where there are steep drop offs where there could be potential geoduck tracts that DNR hasn't considered at because of the restriction.
  - This recommendation is moving harvest footprint onto the other resource and resource manager. It doesn't benefit certain tribes, but it may create an impact somewhere else by taking clams in an area. You're trading access to nearshore geoduck with private access to beach.
  - Might have to deal with movement of DNR fleet which may not agree with tribes. Pushing fleet into areas that may have other issues.

**ii. Provide funding for targeted geoduck surveys**

- Proposed recommendation: provide funding for targeted geoduck surveys for the following:
  - a. Exploring and identifying previously unidentified commercial geoduck harvest areas
  - b. Conduct resurveying of areas that have not been surveyed for 10 or more years

- c. Conducting surveys using [YY] methods or technologies (e.g., ROV or sonar)
    - There is a need for more surveying in several areas. The facilitation team is interested in getting feedback on specifics of the recommendation. This is an area where there are resource limitations to explore.
    - Providing funding for investigating technology that could increase the efficiency of these surveys.
    - Don't have a list of areas identified but could add more specificity added in the recommendations.
    - Recommendation could be around identifying potential technologies.
    - Questions/comments on the recommendation:
      - (P. Williams) It makes sense to me. For (c), might want to conduct surveys as the reconnaissance type and with new technologies available that can cover quite a bit of ground. Marine technology society (Seattle chapter) may be able to provide input. Still want to go in with divers to verify actual population. Not sure that population in imaging has been successful.
      - (V. Barry) Geoduck is tricky because they're infauna and other species can be confused with them if using imagery. Looking at technologies is great; I think the potential for sonar is there.
        - L. Tobin had a conversation with an engineer that is developing similar technology for counting infauna by valves. There might be some options in the future, not quite there yet.
        - If we could find technology that could validate our counts, like the show plots we're using now, would be great. Always having divers counting and figuring out densities is important but in terms of what's showing, maybe could look at smaller areas with technology to count. Depends on how quickly this tech develops and cost.
        - From chat: Look at what Flying Fish Technologies has on offer - <https://fft.ai/>
        - I would suggest money be made available but there would be some sort of assessment process instead of an allocation to a certain party.
      - There are a lot of teams during surveys. Looking at the most efficient way to get that done would likely need to be discussed in a co-manager setting.
- iii. **Provide funding for research on stock assessment methodology**
  - Proposed recommendation: Provide funding for research into developing a new or updated show plot method that will consider environmental conditions compared to show.
  - Questions/comments on show plot recommendation:



- Tulalip doesn't use show plots; don't know if it's workable or feasible to incorporate environmental metrics. Show plots contribute to overestimating biomass.
  - A lot of time is spent on a specific site, which could be used for getting other data.
  - Should propose this recommendation against survey for every 5 years.
  - Resources used to improve show plot should be used elsewhere. Don't think it's something that can be fixed. D. Winfrey objects to this recommendation.
  - (V. Barry) Problem with surveying geoduck is that they're not all showing at once unless you use assumption that 100% geoducks are showing while doing transects. I disagree that show plots tend to overestimate biomass. Doing survey now that show plots consistently give us 80-90% show factor.
    - There's not a perfect method right now to correct the count that we get during the surveys. It's worth looking at better method. Sonar could be a potential method if it gets developed. It's worth validating the show plot.
    - From chat: WDFW agrees that the existing show plot approach has its flaws. Perhaps a recommendation that suggests exploring show factor/biomass estimation precision would be more appropriate.
  - Action item: Facilitation team to develop broader recommendation for show plot use and method.
  - Putting more emphasis into the show. Having a PhD thesis or broad dataset where there's correlation of show to environmental conditions and pick ones that are relevant.
    - Is there a way to have a multi-meter drop before doing transects to estimate what the show factor is?
    - With the process using a multi-meter, there's an error surrounding the estimate so that error with the show is in final biomass calculation. The known source of error is not currently being factored into biomass estimate.
  - Could put a drop camera or CTD and record show and environmental conditions for a week and use image recognition to analyze photos to get results fast.
  - With the recommendation, move away from language specifically about show plots but rather develop a better way to account for variability in show.
- iv. Consideration of flexibility in eelgrass depth restrictions**
- The facilitation team worked on development of tailored recommendation after previous discussions with task force and subgroups.

- Proposed recommendation: identify tracts where eelgrass depths are impacting appreciable harvestable biomass and consider flexibility in adjusting restrictions while ensuring the protection of eelgrass.
- Opposition to recommendation includes ease of conducting surveys and harvests, management of existing framework, and protection of eelgrass.
- Remove this from recommendations going forward. Benefit in capturing the topic in Technical Memo so that if the topic is revisited in future, there's documentation of deliberation and considerations that were discussed, but no recommendations accompanying it.
- Herring spawning/macroalgae topic update
  - DFW study going on this season to look at interaction of geoduck harvest and macroalgae. When investigating overlap between tracts and spawning, there was a small percentage of tracts impacted.
  - For Technical Memo, including discussion of points made and characterize ongoing efforts. No recommendations to be developed.

**VI. Discussion of agendas and deliverables for upcoming task force meetings**

- Task Meeting 4 (September):
  - Technical Memo to be finalized and circulated in advance. Circulate draft of enhancement strategies factsheet.
  - Deep dive into enhancement strategies and recommendations. Update on water quality. Check in on harvest restrictions topics.
- Task Meeting 5 (Fall):
  - Finalize enhancement strategies factsheet and circulate in advance. Circulate draft of Ranking Method memo.
  - Deep dive into water quality topics and recommendations.

**VII. Action items and close out**

- See page 2 for list of action items identified from the meeting.