Whatcom Marine Resource Committee Intern

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Internship Title: Internship - Whatcom Marine Resource Committee

Student Name: Stephen Hellin

Internship Dates: May 2022 - Aug 2022

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STUDENT SIGNATURE

DATE: 8/19/2022
During this internship, I worked with Whatcom MRC on many different projects including public outings, events, beach cleanups, festivals, oyster surveys, and digital marketing. I generated digital media for volunteer recruitment for a beach cleanup on Lummi Island in July 2022. I was asked to create original works and send them to the committee for approval. I made 3 different flyers. The committee requested a photo be used, so the flyer with the photograph was used and published throughout the region. The beach cleanup was very successful. I made good connections in the county and we collected a large amount of trash from the beaches of Lummi Island. This was my first time to the island it was nice to explore a new place.

My first project was an Olympia oyster survey in Chuckanut Bay. Working with local experts and students from Bellingham Technical College, I stomped through the deep mudflat of the bay and conducted multiple transect surveys. I learned to identify Pacific and Olympia oysters and how population restoration projects are conducted in our region. I had recent experience conducting transect surveys from classes taken during the school year at WWU, so I was able to assist other students who had never done this kind of field work before.
“What’s The Point?” was a tabling event held at Semiahmoo this summer where nonprofits and other organizations from around the area presented their work to the public. Naturalists took people on beach tours and there were other activities for the public. My role was to assist Whatcom MRC with their booth and discuss their work with members of the public. I went to the beach and collected organisms such as the shore crabs *H. nudus*, *H. oregonensis*, and *C. gracilis* among other species. I kept these animals in glass bowls and taught children about the differences between them, the roles crabs play on the beach, and where to find them. Whatcom MRC brought a digital microscope that used cameras to project on a screen, so used that to teach members of the public about local invertebrate life.

The Whatcom Water Week festival will occur late this summer - after my internship will have ended. Nevertheless I attended multiple meetings with the organizers of the event and I was asked to create digital media for them to post online. I generated 8 templates for them and they have been posted on various platforms. I advised the board on how college-age people receive their media. I explained how radio is not effective for young adults and how social media platforms change in popularity. I advised them to focus on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat if they were to purchase ads targeting a younger crowd. The festival is holding a photo contest this year and I recommended they use Instagram next year as a free way to advertise the event and to hold the contest.

I wish I had been able to organize more beach cleanups for the MRC during my time there. Though these projects are an only temporary solution to solid waste pollution, they get members of the community involved and they enable individuals to make a direct impact that
they can see. In the future, I would love to organize and advertise beach cleanups with nonprofits - possibly turning them into fundraisers.

While I had many useful experiences with Whatcom MRC, I feel that I still need to develop my ability to teaching members of the public complicated concepts. I am not naturally-gifted in science communication, but I feel that the ability to explain science to someone without training is incredibly important, not only for informing someone but also for inspiring future scientists. A big reason I went into science is because of the ways Sir David Attenborough and Steve Irwin inspired me as a child.

In conclusion, I am incredibly thankful for the Whatcom Marine Resource Committee allowing me to tag along with them this summer. I was able to further develop skills in working with the public and public speaking. I truly enjoyed the field work they let me participate in and I feel as if it was an add-on to the classes I have taken at WWU since I was able to use the skills I learned in class in real-world applications.
Beach cleanup participants and results.
Flyers presented to the committee for the beach cleanup project.
Whatcom Water Week social media post proposals.