



minutes

**April 28, 2017 • 9:00am-3:00pm
Big Room, Padilla Bay Reserve
Northwest Straits Commission meeting**

Attendees:

Commission Members: Nan McKay (Chair), Jerry Masters, Doug Stark (Whatcom), Jamey Selleck (Skagit, Vice Chair), Ed Adams (Island), Paul Clampitt (Snohomish), Ron Thom, Tom Cowan, Jeff Taylor (Jefferson-alternate)

Commission Staff: Rich Childers, Nicole Jordan, Sasha Horst, Lucas Hart

Others in Attendance: Commissioner Ron Wesen (Skagit County Commissioner), Karin Berkholtz (Puget Sound Partnership), Caroline Gibson (Northwest Straits Foundation), Elisa Dawson (Snohomish MRC staff), Morty Cohen (Skagit MRC), Gregg Ridder, Ruth Blyther, Rachel Best, Ed Bowlby (Clallam MRC, Chair), Tracy Alker (Skagit MRC staff), Cheryl Lowe (Jefferson MRC staff), Arnie Klaus (San Juan MRC staff), Franchesca Perez (Snohomish MRC, Chair), Jay Lind (Skagit MRC), Traci Sanderson (Snohomish MRC), Sarah Brown (Snohomish MRC, Vice Chair), Christie Heyer, Mel Malkoff, Austin Rose (Whatcom MRC staff)

Absent: Sheida Sahandy, Terry Williams, Dale Moses (Jefferson), Tom Temple (San Juan) representative

Welcome and Introductions

Nan McKay opened the meeting and introduced Ron Wesen, Skagit County Commissioner. Commissioner Wesen provided a welcome, thanking the Commission and Skagit MRC for their work and highlighted the importance of agriculture as well as shorelines in the County economy. He encouraged attendees to go see the tulip fields in bloom.

The minutes from the March Northwest Straits Commission meeting were approved with one change.

MRC Presentations

Each MRC presented a proposed project for the upcoming year. The Commission and other attendees provided feedback during a question and answer period following each presentation

1. **Skagit MRC, Morty Cohen–Salish Sea Stewards**
 - a. Morty presented on the Salish Sea Stewards volunteer training program. The goals of the program are to provide background, training and volunteer coordination; increase visibility of the Skagit MRC through volunteer activity and publications; and provide a strong base of training volunteers to support programs of Skagit MRC and the Northwest Straits Initiative.



minutes

- b. The Commission discussed the class as an opportunity for local residents to learn project background and basic volunteer aspects of the MRC. The Commission discussed the difficulty of tracking volunteer hours across all MRCs. Skagit MRC uses [Volgistics](#) to track volunteer hours.
2. **Whatcom MRC, Doug Stark–Chuckanut Bay Health and Restoration**
 - a. Doug presented a Story Map on the community use of Chuckanut Bay and the MRC's effort to restore and preserve its health. MRC activities include outreach to the local neighborhood, school groups and recreational users of the area. The MRC plans to do a community workshop in June to communicate their work in Chuckanut Bay.
 - b. Commission members discussed the local and tribal use of the area including public shellfish harvest. No other organization is involved in restoring the area, so this is work that would not be happening without the MRC. Ron suggested looking at the Dungeness Bay study on pollution source.
3. **Jefferson MRC, Cheryl Lowe–Evaluating Outreach Efforts**
 - a. Cheryl presented on the MRCs strategies to evaluate the effectiveness of outreach campaigns. Key steps include identifying the purpose, audience and context of outreach messages. They explored various ways to measure changed behavior including photos of voluntary no anchor zone usage during busy seasons, online surveys after programs and follow up evaluations taking place six months after the event.
 - b. Commissioners discussed the difficulty in measuring effectiveness of outreach campaigns across the Northwest Straits Initiative. Suggestions on improving outreach efforts included being deliberate in targeting an audience and narrowing monitoring efforts to one aspect of a project. Ron suggested looking at eelgrass health as a measurement of effectiveness of no anchor zones.
4. **Clallam MRC, Ed Bowlby–Pigeon Guillemot Surveys**
 - a. Ed presented on the Pigeon Guillemot monitoring project. The MRC hosted a training and then identified volunteers to survey at designated sites. Volunteers record the total number of birds, burrow visits, fish prey and any disturbances. The MRC is expanding the project to survey additional sites.
 - b. Commission members discussed the use and end result of collected monitoring data. Ed said the information is given to WA Department of Fish and Wildlife. The project in Clallam County is an expansion of the project done by Island MRC.
5. **Island MRC, Gregg Ridder–Eelgrass Measurement Methods**
 - a. Gregg presented on the various methods used to survey eelgrass beds in Island County by the MRC. Ken Urstad, Island MRC member, conducts underwater surveys at selected sites using a towfish laser camera and his boat. Gregg conducts aerial surveys of the entire shoreline by plane and captures thousands of images which are stamped with GIS coordinates and stitched into a continuous record. A third method was tested this year with a sonar survey done by Albert Foster at ten sites. The data is given to Department of Natural Resources and included in SoundIQ.



minutes

- b. Commissioners discussed the pros and cons of using the different methods. Aerial surveys are efficient for large areas but do not identify plant species as underwater videography does.
6. **San Juan MRC, Arnie Klaus–Marine Managers’ Workshop–Next Steps**
 - a. Arnie presented an overview of the San Juan MRCs projects for 2017-2018. He presented figures and maps of the San Juan region and showed the potential impacts of increased ship traffic and oil spill risks. The Marine Managers’ Workshop is a venue to build community resilience to oil spills.
 - b. The Commission recommended the MRC focus on breaking down the larger issue of oil spill risk into projects that can be executed by the MRC on a yearly basis. Notes from the previous Marine Managers’ Workshop will provide focus for future workshops.
7. **Snohomish MRC, Franchesca Perez–Ocean Literacy, Awareness and Engagement**
 - a. Franchesca presented on their project to promoting ocean literacy in the community by screening an ocean conservation themed film, both at a public venue and in several school districts, and using the [MyCoast](#) smartphone app for collective monitoring of shoreline. The project team is watching several ocean conservation themed films to select from.
 - b. Commission members praised the MyCoast app as a way to engage citizen scientists and discussed its potential future applications, and suggested Florian Graner’s film [Beneath the Salish Sea](#). The Commission discussed using voluntary surveys as a way to measure changed behavior.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

Business Items

The 2017 MRC Conference will be held November 3-4 at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel in Bellingham, Washington. Ideas for conference topics or presenters can be forwarded to Nicole Jordan at jordan@nwstraits.org.

An MRC staff meeting will be held on July 18 from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM at the Northwest Straits Commission offices at Padilla Bay Reserve.

Election of Officers

Nan McKay was elected to serve another one-year term as Chair of the Commission. Jamey Selleck was elected to serve another one-year term as Vice Chair of the Commission.

The next Commission meeting will be on May 26, 2017 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM by WebEx Conference Call