



# Minutes

February 23, 2024 10:00 AM-2:30 PM  
In-Person Meeting  
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

## **Attendees**

**Commission Members:** Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Mike MacKay (Whatcom), Ken Collins (Island), Ginny Broadhurst, Christina Koons (San Juan), Laura Bradstreet (Puget Sound Partnership), Nan McKay, Jeff Taylor (Jefferson)

**Commission Staff:** Dana Oster, Jeff Whitty, Caitlyn Blair, Sasha Horst, Lucas Hart, Allie Simpson, Jessica Owens

**Others in Attendance:** Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Kayla Mrozik (NW Straits Foundation), Jerry Masters (NW Straits Foundation), Austin Rose, Dana Flerchinger, Rick Beauregard, Kaylee Galloway (Whatcom County Council), Hayden Jenkins (Senator Murray's Staff)

**Absent:** Julia Parrish, Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission)

## **Welcome and Introductions:**

Tim Ellis welcomed the group with introductions and the tribal acknowledgement.

The January NW Straits Commission minutes were approved by consensus.

## **Speed Date with a Scientist**

Braeden Van Deynze, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife Resource Economist, presented on the emerging research and data of measuring the demand for freshwater recreation in the North Puget Sound region.

## **Business Items**

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

**U.S. v WA Boldt Decision event:** Lucas gave a debrief on the U.S. v WA Boldt Decision event that six NW Straits Commission staff were able to attend. The event brought together several tribes and communities around the NW Straits and Puget Sound region. Tribal members, policy leaders and youth shared the history and present struggles and accomplishments of the Boldt Decision and upholding tribal treaty rights. NW Straits Commission staff are grateful to the NW Indian Fisheries Commission and the Muckleshoot Tribe for hosting this event and inviting us to attend.



# Minutes

**Green Crab Ad-Hoc Committee:** Allie shared that the green crab ad hoc committee will be implemented. The Department of Fish and Wildlife is assessing ways to alter their approach to management of European Green crab to focus more on regional and local coordination. The ad hoc committee will guide the NW Straits Commission's role in European Green crab trapping in the future.

**DEI Update:** Allie shared that the NW Straits Commission has moved forward with a DEI consultant, Athena Group, to assess diversity, equity, and inclusion within the NW Straits Initiative. The NW Straits Commission reached out to MRC members for interest in attending meetings and providing support on documents. The first meeting to kick off this project is Friday, March 1. If you have questions about DEI at the NW Straits Initiative, please contact Allie Simpson ([simpson@nwstraits.org](mailto:simpson@nwstraits.org)).

**Impact Report:** The NW Straits Commission 2023 Impact Report will be available digitally as of February 27, 2024. To read the impact report, see our [website](#), or this [link](#). Thank you to everyone who contributed!

**2024 NWSI Conference Update:** Caitlyn shared that after a long and exhaustive process of research, she has secured the Delta Hotel in Everett, Snohomish County. The Conference will be held on November 15-16, 2024. If you have questions about the 2024 annual conference, please e-mail Caitlyn ([blair@nwstraits.org](mailto:blair@nwstraits.org)).

**Puget Sound Day on the Hill:** Lucas shared that Puget Sound Day on the Hill will be May 13 – 17. The NW Straits Commission approved to add our signature to the letters of support by consensus.

**Northwest Straits Commission Director Position Update:** Lucas shared that the Northwest Straits Commission Director position's supervisor will be changing from the Padilla Bay Director to the Shorelands and Environmental Assistance (SEA) Program Manager. The change is necessary to accommodate the Northwest Straits Commission Director's position as an Exempt Management Services (EMS) employee, as opposed to a Washington Management Services Employee (WMS). The position has been EMS for a number of years. EMS positions in the SEA Program report to the Program Manager. The change in supervisory status will elevate the Commission Director in the Department of Ecology and allow them to work more directly on contracting, staffing, agency related funding and other decisions that directly affect Northwest Straits Commission business.



# Minutes

## Committee Updates

**Science Advisory Committee:** Dana shared that the committee had a meeting in January. At the meeting, the committee nominated Tom Mumford to be the Science Advisory Committee representative on the NW Straits Initiative 2024 conference planning committee. Dana shared that the committee is working to create educational trainings for MRCs, and the first training will involve applied social science.

**Executive Committee:** Alan shared that the committee recommends creating a second tribal seat on the Northwest Straits Commission. The seat would represent a coalition of tribes. Lucas and Cecilia Gobin would work together to seek nominations from the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. The NW Straits Commission motioned to approve this by consensus.

The Committee requested that Todd Hass be approved to serve on the Green Crab Ad-Hoc Committee. Todd was nominated by Laura Bradstreet to serve as her delegate on the Ad-Hoc Committee. The NW Straits Commission approved this nomination by consensus.

The committee discussed conservation credits and mitigation funds, which are intended to offset the impacts of development that have negative consequences to the environment. The NW Straits Commission has no policy on use of these funds. The committee brought this topic to the NW Straits Commission to discuss if a policy is needed. Laura recommended that Ahren Stroming present about this topic at a NW Straits Commission meeting. The committee will continue discussing this topic in future meetings.

**External Relations:** Nan shared that there is excitement and momentum for Puget Sound Day on the Hill from May 13 – 17. There were no further updates at this time.

**Remarks from Whatcom County Commissioner Kaylee Galloway, District 1:** Kaylee Galloway shared some remarks with the group. In her position, she specifically addresses climate change at a local level. Whatcom County approved a climate action plan in November 2021, and worked with 19 advisory groups on this plan, including Whatcom MRC.

## Public Comment

No public comment.

**Harmful Algal Bloom Project by Rick Beauregard (Whatcom MRC):** Rick Beauregard gave a presentation on the Drayton Harbor Harmful Algal Bloom project. In 2023, they surveyed phytoplankton and harmful algal bloom species (HABS) to determine biotoxin presence in Drayton Harbor, and how these biotoxins contributed to paralytic shellfish toxins. Volunteers spent over



# Minutes

2,000 hours collecting data and analyzed over 620 phytoplankton samples. For more information, see the presentation slides [here](#).

## MRC Reports

### Clallam – Alan Clark

- The MRC continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Elwha Beach surveys of users are randomly occurring monthly.
- The joint Jefferson/Clallam MRC meeting is on March 6th in Sequim.
- The MRC's advisory Sub-Committee is continuing to work on language for Clallam MRC to advise BOCC.
- Ediz Hook planting will occur on March 26th & 28th.
- HAZWOPER/Oiled bird training took place February 13 & 14 at the Jamestown Tribal Center.
- The MRC's new Administrative Assistant is starting February 20th!

### Island – Ken Collins

- The MRC presented at the ALE Program Science Panel.
- The Jan Holmes Coastal Volunteer Award was awarded to Scott Chase.
- The MRC has launched its Comprehensive Planning process effective January 2024. This work will frame a vision and code elements for the County through 2045. The Island County Marine Resources Committee has formed a sub-committee to address opportunities related to marine resources.

### Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- MRC staff for Clallam and Jefferson, along with Robert Knapp, Clallam MRC Tribal Representative, are working on organizing a joint Clallam-Jefferson MRC meeting set for March 6 to include a guest speaker, Cecilia Gobin, presenting on Tribal Treaty Rights as well as time to network across MRCs.
- The MRC connected Port of Port Townsend staff, NW Straits Foundation Shore Friendly staff, and fourteen members of the public for a site visit at Quilcene Herb Beck Marina on January 20. The site visit provided an opportunity to discuss the feasibility of restoring the natural shoreline as a component of the Port's dredging activities at the marina, using dredge spoils for beach nourishment and other options for enhancing the site for wildlife and public enjoyment.
- The MRC Coordinator will be stepping down from her position as of February 23, and Jefferson County has begun the process of finding her replacement.
- The storm surge projects are now on Sound IQ.

### San Juan – Christina Koons

- Outreach efforts are well underway for the Free Vessel Turn-In Event in April. Fliers have been posted, press releases printed in local papers, a flurry of social media posts and



# Minutes

shares have reached the interwebs blasting the message out even farther. Eligible vessel owners will need to apply to the program turn through DNR to participate in the turn-in event.

- The MRC represented Plastic Free Salish Sea at the recent 25th Storming the Sound Conference for marine educators at the end of January. It was a great way to spread the message about reducing plastic pollution and finding positive ways to prevent and remove litter from our local waterways.
- The County has been working on updating their marine stewardship plan. The recent draft was sent out for peer review.

## Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- **Bowman Bay Seining:** We are conducting bi-monthly beach seining surveys with the NW Straits Foundation to document fish use as part of the comprehensive study on the Bowman Bay Restoration Project. The first seining event took place January 26th with 7 volunteers.
- **Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment:** Posted the Request for Quotes and Qualifications for the Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment project. Deadline for responses is February 29th.
- **Culturally Responsive Elementary Science Teaching (CREST):** CREST is a 3-year research project to study the effect of teachers utilizing the 'Explore the Salish Sea' curriculum which takes elementary school kids (primarily 5th grade) out to the beach and incorporates science and indigenous knowledge and practices into culturally responsive instruction. Skagit MRC is one of several community-based organizations that signed up to participate. Pete Haase is Skagit MRC's representative. Teacher workshops will take place next year in Whatcom County with 30 5<sup>th</sup> graders.

## Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The Starlight beach walk was held on February 6th and had a great turn out of over 160 people. Read the article [here](#).
- The MRC is beginning the strategic planning process, and each MRC member is currently being interviewed to capture their perspective. In March, the MRC will participate in an in-person workshop to further delve into the process.
- The MRC wrote a one pager on dredge spoils.

## Whatcom – Mike MacKay

- Whatcom County is commencing its 2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, and Planning and Development Services (PDS) staff are soliciting recommendations from the Marine Resources Committee on what amendments should be considered in the Marine Resources Lands section of Chapter 8, Resource Lands, and Chapter 10, Environment. The MRC will approve their final list of recommendations during their March 7th meeting.



# Minutes

- A few new members joined the MRC including Avery Maverick and Joe Hoats. The MRC also now has representation from Blaine City Council: Mayor Mary Lou Steward, and Bellingham City Council: Jace Cotton.
- The MRC has sent invitations to all schools in the county for the Kids on the Beach program. 17 schools have responded with interest.

## Partner Updates

**NW Straits Foundation:** Sarah Fisker from Jefferson Marine Resources Committee and Doug McCutchen have joined the NW Straits Foundation Board. Phil Salditt, Foundation Board member, joined Snohomish MRC. Kayla Mrozik joined the NW Straits Foundation as the Marketing and Communications Coordinator in January.

Jerry Masters shared upcoming events with the group. On April 10 from 10 AM – 2:00 PM, there will be a spring planting party at Deception Pass State Park. On May 5, there will be a spring party at the Edmonds waterfront, more details will be available soon.

**Puget Sound Partnership:** Laura Bradstreet shared updates from the Puget Sound Partnership. Puget Sound Day on the Hill is May 13-17, 2024, in Washington D.C. Laura attended a meeting with Senator Maria Cantwell to discuss the “Whale Desk”, which is a pilot program that was signed into law in December 2022. The program is meant to bring together vessel operators, scientists, and the Coast Guard to reduce encounters that disturb whales. Laura also mentioned that the state [legislative tracking page](#) and [Recovery Acceleration Funding Tool](#) are now available.

The Puget Sound Partnership is also hiring positions such as an Ecosystem Recovery Coordinator and a Boards Program Coordinator. Visit their [website](#) for more information.