



minutes

January 31, 2020 • 10:30 AM-3:00 PM
Coupeville Library
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Chris Castner, Alan Clark (Clallam-Chair), Elsa Schwartz (Island-Vice Chair), Nan McKay, Phyllis Bravinder (Skagit-Alternate)

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Dana Oster

Absent: Christina Koons (San Juan), Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Pete Haase (Skagit) Tom Cowan, Ron Thom, Cecilia Gobin (Tribal)

Others: Phil Green (San Juan member), Barbara Bennett (Island – alternate), Laura Rivas (Puget Sound Partnership), Monica Montgomery (Jefferson MRC staff), Anna Toledo (Island MRC staff), Linda Ridder (President-Sound Water Stewards), Janet St. Clair (Island County Commissioner)

Welcome and Introductions

Alan Clark opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

The minutes from the December Northwest Straits (NWS) Commission meeting were approved by consensus as written.

NWS Commission - committee reports

Executive Committee

Elsa reported out on the Executive Committee. The committee is discussing an invitation to join the Billy Frank Jr. Salmon Coalition and the Commission submitted comments to the EPA on their current National Estuary Program (NEP) funding model review.

Science Advisory Committee

Dana reported that the committee is working on the meeting calendar and work plan for 2020. Looking forward to social scientist Kathy Wolf joining the committee this year. The committee is planning to generate a project priority list in case of new funding opportunities.

External Relations Committee

Lucas reported that the committee has a meeting scheduled in March. Main focus has been conversations with NOAA on shared priorities. Will have more information after March.

Communication Committee

Sasha updated the group on the status of a Request for Qualifications and Quotations (RFQQ) that will be posted by Ecology in early February. The RFQQ will solicit bids for a contractor to provide a communications audit and plan. The work is anticipated to be done during the late spring through summer, depending on the eventual contract timing.

Director's report



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Lucas reminded the group that the Commission approved a policy in September that is part of the Rules of Procedure. He distributed copies of the current rules for the Commission to review and confirm approval at the next meeting in February.

The Governor's office has reappointed Nan McKay and Tom Cowan to serve on the Commission. They are now beginning a four-year term.

A new staff member for the Communication and Outreach Specialist position has been hired and will begin on February 3. Her name is Katie Harris. A position announcement for a temporary Ecosystem Project Coordinator was posted and is now closed. The review and hiring process is now underway. This position is estimated as a six-month position.

The 2020 planning retreat will be on March 26-27 at Padilla Bay. Hilary Wilkinson of Veda Environmental is facilitating. Lucas shared a draft version of advance questions for MRCs and some background information about the questions and the purpose, along with some guidance about how to approach them. The Commission discussed the questions and provided input for Lucas to revise the document before sending to MRCs. Lucas plans to send the questions directly to MRCs on Monday, February 3 with responses due by March 16 to allow time for all MRCs to discuss it as a group at their meeting.

Presentation: Island MRC – Sea Level Rise Workshops

Anna Toledo presented on the Island MRC's Sea Level Rise workshops. A copy of the presentation is available. Copies of the workshop presentations and sea level rise materials can be found [here](#). To focus on local actions during the workshops, Anna talked about local strategies such as building higher, moving houses back, and natural softshore protection. A key point made is that armoring is not meant to be flood protection, it's designed for erosion protection.

Presentation: Sound Water Stewards

Linda Ridder presented about the Sound Waters Stewards program, which provides training to volunteers in Island County to support Puget Sound community outreach, stewardship and citizen science. Sound Water Stewards has trained 720 volunteers and volunteers log more than 20,000 volunteer hours annually. The Sound Waters One-Day University is held the first Saturday in February, and Linda encouraged everyone to attend.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Northwest Straits (NWS) Foundation update

Caroline Gibson provided an update on the Northwest Straits Foundation. The Foundation has operationalized their fundraising plan by quarter, and they are emphasizing individual and corporate giving, along with partnerships with business. The Foundation board has two new board members: Lee Whitford (Jefferson County) and Emily Schaller (San Juan County). Each brings a different skill set to the



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board. The Foundation currently has a development position that is open until filled. The Opportunity Fund for 2020 has an estimated \$20,000 available, and the Foundation anticipates issuing a call for applications to MRCs in the next few months. A total of \$140,000 has gone out to MRCs since the Opportunity Fund was started.

Puget Sound Partnership (Partnership) update

Laura Rivas attended the meeting on behalf of the Partnership and provided a report. The Partnership is beginning a National Estuary Program evaluation process that requires a written report due in mid-March. A corresponding site visit will happen in June. Partnership staff will keep us informed about the process.

The federal National Estuary Program budget was approved with good news, as the Puget Sound geographic program was approved at \$33 million, which is up \$5 million from last year. How those funds will be programmed has not yet been determined.

Puget Sound Day on the Hill is coming up April 28-29, and Laura encouraged those who are able to attend to go. Information is available on their website at <https://www.psp.wa.gov/psdoth2020.php>.

Welcome – Island County

Island County Commissioner Janet St. Clair welcomed the group to Island County. She is interested in the science behind the work of the MRC and Commission, and how to talk to people about it. Island County has the largest contiguous shoreline of any county in the state so allocating resources and policy around shorelines makes sense, and she is always seeking to improve or add to the protection of the Salish Sea. Commissioner St Clair expressed her appreciation for the Commission and the work that it does.

In response to a question about the value of the local MRC, Commissioner St. Clair noted that to get good policy you must have good data and tell the story. She appreciates that the MRC is volunteer driven and non-partisan, and is a unique voice that provides information that isn't vested in protecting their job or turf. This is powerful regardless of where someone is on the political spectrum.

In addition to marine issues, she shared that the County is currently spending a lot of time on health care, launching a long-term expanded broadband effort, looking at growth management, and gearing up to conduct the 2020 census.

Business items

Dana updated the group about the Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan and the comments submitted during the public comment period that ended January 22. She shared some of the input from public comment, both from individuals and organizations. There are other potential next steps and roles for the Commission moving forward. The lack of funding was recognized as an issue for implementing the Plan. The Washington Department of Natural Resources will plan to lead working groups for research and monitoring as well as policy and planning for the next two years.



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The MRC symposium originally planned for January will be re-booted and scheduled for early April. Dana noted that we are hoping to schedule it as an annual event in January. She is seeking MRC feedback on the draft agenda, particularly to ensure that it will serve what the MRCs want. It is expected to be an opportunity to share information about current projects.

Lucas reported that some individuals have been discussing creation of a mitigation bank in Washington State, primarily to facilitate faster removal of creosote pilings. This is still in very early stages of discussion.

Lucas shared the Operations Plan and reviewed and focused on a short list of those items that are behind schedule or need additional focus. The Operations Plan will be part of the discussion at the upcoming retreat in March.

Lucas reported out on a few bills introduced in the WA State Legislature: HB2769/SB6528 on prevention of derelict vessels, SB6147 on shoreline stabilization, SB6454 on anadromous fish preservation, HB2549 on salmon recovery in the growth management act, HB2550 on net ecological gain, HJM40112 on international year of the salmon, and SB6213 on polystyrene product phase out.

Sasha reminded MRCs to watch for an update on the process for year two project proposals that will need to be done.

MRC reports

Monthly reports for each MRC are available by visiting this link (MRC reports begin on p.12):
https://www.nwstraits.org/media/2902/nwsc-jan31_updated.pdf

Clallam

Alan noted that the MRC has traditionally done oiled wildlife and HAZWOPER training, but they are re-thinking how they will carry out their oil spill training. The MRC is working with the county commissioners on climate resiliency. They currently have two open positions to be filled.

Island

Elsa reported that MRC member Linda Rhodes has term limited out so they have a vacancy. Linda will remain involved as a non-voting science advisor to the MRC. The MRC is holding a retreat on February 18 and will be part of the Great Northwest Glass Quest (www.thegreatnwglassquest.com) on February 14-23. In their forage fish sampling eggs were found in Hidden Beach samples. The MRC is working on feasibility and conceptual design for a restoration project at Hoypus Point or Possession Point.

Jefferson

Jeff reported that Jefferson has seven new members and a new staff member, Monica Montgomery. There is some loss of institutional knowledge, but some very involved new members. A new forage fish



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monitoring site in Discovery Bay is currently on hold due to questions about site ownership. Planning for rain gardens to be installed in 2020 continues.

San Juan

Phil reported that San Juan MRC has people at the Seattle Boat Show to talk to people and boaters and distribute the whale warning flag. A presentation on the project will be given at the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference in April, along with their Plastic Free Salish Sea as part of the film program and the Marine Stewardship Area Plan in the poster session. There is currently one vacancy on the MRC to be filled.

Skagit

Phyllis reported that Kevin Anderson was appointed to replace Sarah Tchang from the Port of Anacortes, and Matt Castle replaces Todd Woodard from Samish Indian Nation. The MRC is partnering with Padilla Bay Reserve for Salish Sea Stewards and Kids on the Beach. Fidalgo Bay Day will be held on August 29, 2020.

Snohomish

Snohomish MRC submitted a written report. The MRC has six new members, and have elected a new representative to the Commission, Sarah Brown. The MRC is finalizing a contract for their project to prioritize piling removal in the Snohomish River estuary.

Whatcom

Bob reported that the MRC has six new member appointments to the MRC and two reappointments. The North Sound Stewards program kickoff event drew 25 people. The MRC is lining up their speakers for the 2020 public speaker series.

Roundtable

Elsa mentioned that Restore America's Estuaries has a call for proposals for their summit out, which can be found online at <https://estuaries.org/events/2020-summit/>. Initiative session encouraged.

The next Commission meeting will be on February 28 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM by WebEx Conference Call