



minutes

May 29, 2020 • 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
WebEx – Conference call
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Alan Clark (Clallam-Chair), Elsa Schwartz (Island-Vice Chair), Pete Haase (Skagit), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Tom Cowan, Chris Castner, Sarah Brown (Snohomish), Nan McKay, Cecilia Gobin (Tribal)

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Katie Harris, Sasha Horst, Dana Oster, Allie Simpson

Others in Attendance: Caroline Gibson (Northwest Straits Foundation), Jennifer Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership – Alternate), Anna Toledo (Island), Glen (Alex) Alexander (Whatcom), Austin Rose (Whatcom), Kaylene Riehle (Whatcom), Phil Green (San Juan), Elisa Dawson, Laura Gurley (Snohomish), Paul Dinnel (Skagit)

Absent: Ron Thom, Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Christina Koons (San Juan)

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

Approval of Minutes

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

NWS Commission - committee reports

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee postponed the joint executive committee meeting until August. The Committee recommended making the June Commission meeting WebEx, not in person, and will be three hours. The Commission approved by consensus the extension of all meetings that were previously planned to be in-person, but are held via WebEx due to COVID-19 guidance, to be three hours long. The first meeting this change will impact is the June Commission Meeting, which will be on June 26 from 10 am – 1 pm. The Executive Committee recommended edits to Section 13 of the NWSC Rules of Procedure. The Commission approved the proposed changes by consensus.

External Relations Committee

Tom Cowan reported that the Committee will meet in June to discuss near-term priorities. Tom reported that the Executive Committee is tracking Washington Senate races. Lucas and Chris Castner met with Department of Ecology Director Laura Watson and Deputy Director Heather Bartlett.

Science Advisory Committee

The Science Advisory Committee continues to advance the Actions to Impacts strategies and methods, including incorporating impacts from the full process of carrying out a project and feedback loops of the project as a whole. The Committee's next meeting is June 3rd.

Ad hoc Communications Committee



minutes

The Communications Committee reported that the interviews that are part of the communications audit and plan are completed. The consultants will attend and present during the June Commission meeting.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC)/Tribal update

Cecilia Gobin reported that the NWIFC signed onto the Puget Sound Kelp Recovery and Conservation Plan vision statement. Cecilia reported that the NWIFC is updating the State of the Watersheds report to reflect what has happened since 2016. Cecilia explained that she and Lucas are exploring the idea of reinstating the Tribal Committee of the Northwest Straits Commission and hosting presentations on hatcheries and pinnipeds.

Puget Sound Partnership update

Jenn Grimm reported that the Puget Sound Day on the Hill has been converted to a virtual event. She encouraged Commissioners to register before the June 4 deadline:

<https://www.psp.wa.gov/psdoth2020.php>

Jenn announced that the Leadership Council will meet on June 10 via Zoom. Jenn reported that the Puget Sound Partnership was able to absorb the 15% budget cut required of all state agencies. Funding for the Northwest Straits Commission will not be impacted.

Northwest Straits Foundation update

Caroline Gibson reported that the Foundation secured funding to continue their shoreline monitoring work for the next two years. Caroline announced that the Orca Forum will be held online. Don Hunger is hosting phone calls with MRC lead staff to hear project ideas from MRC for potential future funding.

MRC Project Presentations

Snohomish- Snohomish Estuary pilings project

Laura Gurley presented on the MRC's project to inventory pilings in the Snohomish Estuary. They have inventoried over 10,000 to date. The MRC has developed a prioritization framework to guide removal of the highest priority creosote pilings.

Whatcom – North Sounds Stewards

Glen (Alex) Alexander presented on North Sound Stewards. This was a project born out of the need for well-trained and knowledgeable volunteers for MRC projects. North Sound Stewards volunteers logged more than 1,500 hours at 119 events in 2019. Kaylene Riehle explained the software that Whatcom MRC uses for volunteers to track hours and that North Sound Stewards are launching an iNaturalist program for summer 2020.

Clallam – Internship program



minutes

Alan Clark presented on the MRCs Internship program. 34 students have completed paid internships with Clallam MRC since 2014. Interns are paired with mentors who work with one of Clallam MRC's partners. Alan explained that the projects that interns help with include kelp bed monitoring, crabber outreach, green crab capture and removal, video projects, Olympia oyster restoration, and smolt trap monitoring.

Skagit – Pinto abalone restoration

Paul Dinnel presented on pinto abalone restoration, which began in 2009. He explained the site selection criteria and juvenile abalone preparation, and described the out plant modules, release, and follow-up surveys. Paul reported that a total of 15,000+ seed abalone have been added to the eight Skagit County sites.

Round table

There were no round table items.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

* The next regular Commission meeting will be on June 26 by WebEx.*