



minutes

July 31, 2020 • 10:00 AM-1:00 PM

Zoom – 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), Christina Koons (San Juan), Nan McKay, Ron Thom, Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership- Alternate)

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

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger (Northwest Straits Foundation), Caroline Gibson (Northwest Straits Foundation), Kate Elliott (Maul Foster and Alongi), Sidney Counts (Maul Foster and Alongi), Ann Prusha (Island)

Absent: Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Cecilia Gobin (Tribal)

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

Approval of Minutes

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

Communications Audit + Plan

Kate Elliott from Maul, Foster and Alongi (MFA) explained the overall scope and timeline of the project and reiterated the recommendations from the June Commission meeting:

- Document clarifying roles and responsibilities
- Host more events – MRC retreats, conferences, carpools
- Streamline onboarding for new MRC members
- More clarity on the direction of the Foundation
- Organizational chart with funding info
- Clarify whether it's important to understand the Foundation's history

The Commissioners were presented with five draft elevator pitches, and broke into small groups to discuss them. Those elevator pitches were:

- The Northwest Straits Initiative is a community-led _____ working to protect and restore the marine environment of Puget Sound.
 - Organization
 - Vision
 - Alliance
 - Collaborative



Commissioners voted through Mentimeter for their ranked choice options. Kate Elliott will integrate the top choice into the communications plan.

The Commissioners discussed removing the geographical reference at the end of the elevator pitch, since Northwest Straits is in the name. Commissioners reinforced that the pitch should be short, concise, and accurate.

NW Straits Commission Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Elsa reported that the Executive Committee resolved the liability insurance questions related to kayak help monitoring. The committee will meet with the Foundation's executive committee in early September. Elsa reported that the committee is drafting a policy to address the steps MRCs should take when considering the use of Commission funds for match on third-party grants. Elsa explained that the Executive Committee asked the Science Advisory Committee to develop recommendations for the Commission in regards to joining the Ocean Acidification Alliance.

External Relations Committee

Tom Cowan reported that the committee did not meet in July. The committee has been tracking state funding. Commission staff continue to identify opportunities that could be eligible for stimulus funding.

Science Advisory Committee

Ron Thom reported that the Committee is focused on developing a framework for Actions-to-Impacts that can be scalable to the MRC level. Ron reported that the committee discussed possible association with the Ocean Acidification Alliance, and how the MRCs work ties into the Alliance's work.

Business items

Restore America's Estuaries grant submissions

Dana Oster reported that the Commission is submitting a grant proposal to expand the eelgrass protection zone program, based on the model in Port Townsend.

European green crab update

Allie Simpson is working with WDFW and Washington SeaGrant on European green crab management in Drayton Harbor. The team has caught 91 green crab so far. She reiterated how important organizational partnerships are in the work to trap and remove green crab. Allie announced the Whatcom MRC-hosted webinar on Aug. 12 that will be about green crab management in northern Whatcom County.

Commission meeting schedule



The remaining 2020 meeting dates are August 28, Sept. 24 (this has been updated since the July meeting), October 29, and December 11.

Puget Sound Partnership update

Jenn Grimm reported that The House Appropriations bill contains an additional \$5M for the Puget Sound Geographic Program. If the Senate passes that bill, the Partnership funding for the NEP will have increased by \$10M over two years.

Jenn reported that the Partnership wrapped up the Virtual Puget Sound Days on the Hill events on July 10. 100-200 people participated in each virtual event. Senator Murray and staff from Senator Cantwell's office participated, along with Congressmen Kilmer, Heck, Schrier, Jayapal, DelBene, Larsen, and McMorris Rodgers, and staff from Rep. Smith's office. The Partnership is considering more virtual events in August and October.

Jenn reported that the Leadership Council adopted the vision for the 2022-2026 Action Agenda at its June meeting. The Leadership Council also adopted revisions to our Vital Signs and indicators.

The Puget Sound Leadership Council adopted an updated set of Vital Signs and indicators for the biophysical parts of the ecosystem, and the proposed approach to developing the 2022-2026 Action Agenda, at their meeting on June 10.

Northwest Straits Foundation update

Caroline Gibson reported that the Foundation started their new fiscal year on July 1. Caroline announced the release of the second episode of Salish SeaFresh, the Foundation's video series. Caroline said that the Orca Forums have been postponed until October. Caroline is collaborating with Skagit and Jefferson MRCs on two grant proposals.

MRC Reports

Clallam –

Alan Clark reported that the MRC has confirmed three new alternates. The MRC's smolt trap interns, mentors and Lower Elwha project biologist did an outfall survey at the lower 1 mile of Tumwater Creek, and shared the information with the City of Port Angeles. In partnership with SeaDoc Society the Clallam MRC is compiling an educational outreach package centered on the book "Salish Sea" to be given to 275 students in the Boys & Girls Club Lunchbox program.

Island –

Elsa reported that they have a new MRC member, Andi Kopit. Elsa reported that the feasibility studies are complete for both Hoypus Point and Possession Point, and conceptual design is complete for Hoypus



Point. Elsa said the Foundation is applying for funding for permitting, final design, and construction at Hoypus Point, and the MRC will continue to support and partner on this work. Elsa reported that the MRC has distributed “Catch More Crab” handouts to hardware stores and marinas. Handouts, crab gauges, and rot cord are available at the County offices and by contacting MRC members or staff.

Jefferson –

Jeff Taylor reported that the MRC is discussing ways to assess boater compliance with the navigational buoys since the Wooden Boat Festival (the busy weekend when this assessment has been conducted in the past) will be held virtually this year. Jeff reported that the first kelp monitoring survey of the summer season occurred on June 26 with three MRC. The second survey took place on July 18 with the help of four MRC volunteers. The MRC is working with the Foundation on a coastal watersheds grant, to fund the installation of two additional rain gardens in collaboration with the City of Port Townsend

San Juan-

Christina reported that the upcoming budget for San Juan County has no budget for natural resources. Christina announced that the Plastic Free Salish Sea initiative officially launched on July 20, 2020 during Plastic Free July. Outreach efforts to boaters continue in earnest throughout the County and region in partnership with Be Whale Wise. The MRC partnered with UW Friday Harbor Labs and residents of False Bay Biological Preserve to conduct a visitors-use survey.

Skagit-

Pete Haase reported that volunteers are resuming forage fish surveys. Pete said that Skagit MRC provided a letter supporting the trestle/causeway removal and replacement proposal. Skagit MRC member Paul Dinnel is featured in the Northwest Straits Foundation’s latest episode of the Salish Sea Fresh video series highlighting Olympia oysters.

Snohomish-

Sarah Brown reported that the crabber outreach video (which replaced the in-person events) has been viewed more than 18,000 times. Sarah reported that all pilings in the Snohomish Estuary have been mapped and field verified as part of the pilings project, and analysis is currently underway to prioritize pilings for future removal. The MRC will issue a draft report to stakeholders for review from July 22 – August 17th. A final report will be available to the public mid-September. The MRC has collected their yearly kelp monitoring data at Edmonds, Meadowdale, and Mukilteo. Additional monitoring is scheduled at Hat Islands and another round at Edmonds for August.

Whatcom-

Bob Cecile reported that The MRC will host a virtual European Green Crab forum on August 12. The intent is to provide a general background on green crab, why they are a problem, how to identify them, what to do if you find one and current information about green crab found in Drayton Harbor. Bob reported that the Whatcom MRC hosted a Drought Contingency Forum to share information about



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drought vulnerability and preparedness in Whatcom County, and drought contingency planning at the federal, state, and local levels on July 23. The MRC provided a letter of support for the Port of Bellingham's grant applications to the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account and Washington Wildlife Recreation Program, for a small watercraft dock in Fairhaven, and potential to create a small pocket beach. Bob reported that there is potential for the MRC to do some forage fish monitoring in the area of the project.

Emerging issues breakout session

Participants broke out into small groups and discussed emerging issues that the commission should address. Topics included:

- COVID impacts on county budgets. How are counties responding to the economic downturn and how will it affect conservation efforts in each county?
- Advisory role of MRCs: How can we increase engagement with elected officials?
- Role of gubernatorial appointees: How can these Commissioners be more effective in their roles and responsibilities?

Round table

Pete Haase reported that the Washington Sea Grant Crab Team has instituted strong safety precautions that allow them to get volunteers into the field and keep people safe.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

* The next regular Commission meeting will be on August 28.*