



## minutes

September 24, 2020 • 10:00 AM-12:30 PM

Zoom – Conference call

Northwest Straits Commission meeting

### Attendees:

**Commission Members:** Elsa Schwartz (Island-Vice Chair), Pete Haase (Skagit), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Sarah Brown (Snohomish), Christina Koons (San Juan), Tom Cowan, Ron Thom, Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Nan McKay, Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership- Alternate)

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

**Others in Attendance:** Kate Elliott (Maul Foster and Alongi), Sarah Fisken (Jefferson MRC- Alternate), Austin Rose (Whatcom MRC), Don Hunger (NWS Foundation), Caroline Gibson (NWS Foundation)

**Absent:** Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Alan Clark (Clallam-Chair), Chris Castner

### Welcome and Introductions

Elsa opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

### Approval of Minutes

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

### NW Straits Commission Committee Reports

#### **Executive Committee**

Elsa reported that the Executive Committee has reviewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the NWS Commission and NWS Foundation, and recommended approval of the MOU by the full Commission. Lucas explained that the MOU describes and clarifies the roles and responsibilities between the Commission and Foundation. The Commission decided to wait to make a decision on the MOU to allow MRC representatives to gather additional input.

Elsa reported that the Executive Committee reviewed a memo from the Science Advisory Committee encouraging the Commission to join the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification (OA Alliance). The OA Alliance encourages members to create action plans. The Commission approved joining the OA Alliance by consensus.

Next steps:

- Lucas and Don will draft a message to help guide Commissioners on what type of feedback Lucas and Don are looking for on the MOU.
- MRC representatives will share the MOU with relevant individuals and gather feedback. Comments on the MOU are due back to Lucas on October 16.
- Lucas will follow up with OA Alliance to formalize our commitment/joining.



### **External Relations Committee**

Tom Cowan reported that the committee did not meet in September, but are planning to meet in October. Congressman Rick Larsen is planning visits to MRC sites across the Northwest Straits in October.

### **Science Advisory Committee**

Ron Thom reported that the Committee is advancing the Actions to Impacts diagram. Ron reported that Jen Steger from NOAA will participate in the Actions to Impacts project. Ron spoke with Kristin and Alexandra from the Puget Sound Partnership about their behavior change questionnaire.

### **Business Updates**

#### **Existing County Support to MRCs**

Lucas explained that the document about MRC support to the counties was included in the packet as a result of a question from Nan at the August meeting. It is intended as a summary of information about how MRCs currently operate within their counties and what support they receive from their county.

#### **European green crab update**

Allie Simpson reported that the European green crab team has caught 203 green crabs in Drayton Harbor. Allie explained that the team has increased capture rates in the last two weeks. Allie reported that the team trapping on the Lummi Peninsula have caught more than a thousand green crab, which is unsettling. Allie explained that the Drayton Harbor team has shifted over to Lummi to address that area because of the large numbers.

#### **Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) update**

Cecilia Gobin reported that she and Lucas have scheduled a presentation on hatcheries for the NW Straits Commission at the October meeting. WDFW has released draft Environmental Impact Statement on [commercial whale-watching licensing program](#). The comment period closes October 23.

#### **Puget Sound Partnership Update**

Jenn Grimm reported that the Action Agenda update is in progress, and she encouraged people to participate in the Partnership's virtual workshops on October 1 and October 7. Jenn reported that the Partnership is hiring for two positions- [Monitoring Network Coordinator](#) and [Adaptive Systems and Accountability Program Manager](#).

#### **Northwest Straits Foundation Update**

Caroline Gibson reported that the Foundation has been focused on Shore Friendly, including creating promotional videos. Caroline introduced the "Passport to Marine Adventures" program that Kenny Clarkson is developing in conjunction with local businesses.



## minutes

### **Communications Audit + Plan**

Kate Elliott from Maul, Foster and Alongi (MFA) shared the draft communications plan and Northwest Straits Initiative (NWSI) fact sheet.

The implementation plan is grounded in the three key findings from the audit and interviews. Below are the descriptions of what Commissioners and MRC members are responsible for doing, and what Commission staff are responsible for doing.

1. Confusion between roles of each arm of the Initiative
  - a. Commissioners and MRC members: Attend NWSI 101 presentation
  - b. Commission Staff: Revise onboarding process and materials, offer NWSI 101 presentation twice per year
  
2. No common baseline understanding of the Initiative
  - a. Commissioners and MRC members: Memorize elevator pitch and key messages, use fact sheet when discussing the Initiative
  - b. Commission Staff: Update materials with consistent messaging, integrate key messages moving forward
  
3. Difficulty sharing information beyond the NWSI community
  - a. Commissioners and MRC members: Ensure materials you have are updated and handy
  - b. Commission Staff: Develop targeted external materials

Participants broke out into small groups and discussed the following questions:

- What did you think of this process?
- Did you learn something new?
- Who would you share the new elevator pitch and key messages with?
- Share an “a-ha moment”

### **MRC Reports**

#### **Clallam –**

Clallam MRC published a video completed by the MRC intern. The climate change subcommittee met with Commissioner Bill Peach. Clallam MRC volunteers are winding down their field season, with only forage fish sampling continuing after September.

#### **Island –**



## minutes

Elsa reported that the MRC is partnering with Whidbey Island Conservation District, NWSF, and other partners to celebrate Orca Recovery Day, October 17. Events will include an orca forum, trivia night, art contest, and online eco-challenge. MRC Lead Staff Anna Toledo was interviewed on the [Northwest Fish Passage podcast](#), where she highlighted the work of the MRC, including bull kelp and forage fish monitoring, as well as outreach and restoration work. Construction will take place next month at Seahorse Siesta, where the MRC has been partnering with the NWS Foundation. The restoration at this private community will involve the removal of a barge and bulkhead at the toe of a feeder bluff.

### **Jefferson –**

Jeff Taylor reported that [Olympia oyster](#) and [eelgrass/no-anchor zones](#) videos are up on the NWSC Vimeo and YouTube pages, available to view and share widely! Jeff said that the MRC will be finishing completion of a second rain garden installed this year, on September 23, in Uptown Port Townsend (corner of Benton and Clay Streets).

### **San Juan -**

Christina reported that the MRC will be participating in the Fall Great Islands Clean-up ([www.plasticfreesalishsea.org/events](http://www.plasticfreesalishsea.org/events)). The first phase of the Marine Stewardship Area Plan update is nearing completion, with the drafting of updated Conservation Biodiversity Targets. The MRC has begun an outreach effort within the local community through a series of news articles written by MRC members.

### **Skagit -**

Pete Haase reported that the MRC is hosting a virtual presentation by Paul Dinnel on Olympia Oyster Restoration in Fidalgo Bay- October 7, 4pm-5pm. Planning is now underway for the 2021 Salish Sea Stewards training. Kimberly Cauvel from the Skagit Valley Herald published an article about Fidalgo Bay Day 2020 Scavenger Hunt.

### **Snohomish -**

Sarah Brown reported that the MRC finalized the [Snohomish Estuary Pilings Report](#). Phase 2 of that project will start in October. MRC Kelp Lead Tom Doerge joined WA Department of Natural Resources staff at Edmonds kelp beds to collect health data on kelp. The MRC continues to engage in derelict vessel removal, in partnership with DNR. They have posted four derelict vessels in the Snohomish Estuary for removal. Removal is planned for late October 2020.

### **Whatcom -**

Bob Cecile reported that the MRC received 62 applications for two of their internship opportunities (Forage Fish Survey Intern and North Sound Stewards Volunteer Coordinator Intern). Applications are



## minutes

currently under review by MRC members. Candidates will be chosen by September 23. Bob explained that the MRC's Public Speakers Series continues to need more MRC member support – particularly by way of subject ideas. The group would like to communicate marine related issues to a more diverse audience and thus expand the expertise of speakers (i.e. professors, artists, activists, historians, performers, journalists).

### **Emerging Issues Breakout Session**

Topics discussed included:

- Overdomestication of Puget Sound, loss of biodiversity. An idea was raised to bring a speaker to the Commission to discuss Puget Sound biodiversity changes.
- Update with the Marine Stewardship Area Plan, San Juan County is going to do a social and economic impact report of the Salish Sea. The MRC has concerns around marine resource capacity in San Juan Islands and how to incorporate these concerns into policy and planning.

### **Public comment**

There was no public comment.

\* The next regular Commission meeting will be on **Thursday, October 29**.\*