



minutes

October 29, 2020 • 10:00 AM-12:00 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), Sarah Brown (Snohomish), Phil Green (San Juan-Alternate), Tom Cowan, Ron Thom, Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Nan McKay, Chris Castner, Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership)

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

Others in Attendance: Representative Debra Lekanoff, Sarah Fiske (Jefferson MRC- Alternate), Austin Rose (Whatcom MRC), Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Caroline Gibson (NW Straits Foundation), Adrien Spidle (NWIFC), Ken Currens (NWIFC), Frances Robertson (San Juan MRC), Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership- Alternate)

Absent: Christina Koons (San Juan)

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the September Northwest Straits Commission meeting were approved by consensus.

Welcome from Representative Lekanoff

State Representative Debra Lekanoff thanked the NW Straits Commission for connecting local individuals to important science. Her legislative priorities are long-term salmon restoration, natural resources funding, climate change and resilience, and green infrastructure.

Rep. Lekanoff is working on two bills for the upcoming legislative session:

- Carbon tax bill that would support climate-resilient infrastructure, salmon recovery, and natural resource funding, and supporting underrepresented communities who need help with their utility bills.
- Green infrastructure legislation that would incentivize green building and green infrastructure.

NW Straits Commission Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Elsa reminded the Commission that they had decided at the September Commission meeting to give MRCs the opportunity to review the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the NW Straits Commission and NW Straits Foundation. MRC representatives reported that the MOU is acceptable as-is. The Commission adopted the MOU by consensus.



External Relations Committee

Tom Cowan reported that the committee is continuing to explore partnerships with NOAA. Tom said that Congressman Rick Larsen conducted site visits with all five MRCs in his district. Lucas and Tom are planning to meet with Representative Larsen's staff in November. Christina Koons and Tom met with San Juan County Council candidates, and educated them about the MRC. Tom reported that the committee provided input on the Northwest Straits Commission newsletter during the October committee meeting. Tom said that the committee will be paying attention to the upcoming state legislative session, which begins on January 11, 2021.

Science Advisory Committee

Ron Thom reported that the Committee did not meet over the last month. Ron announced that they will be advancing the Actions to Impacts diagram, and brainstorming some case studies to use in the diagram as examples.

Director's Report

2021-23 MRC Grant Timeline

Lucas presented the MRC grant timeline document. Lucas said that final grant submission deadline is in June, with Commission approval slated for July. Lucas encouraged people to direct their questions about MRC grants to Sasha.

Shorelands and Environmental Assistance (SEA) Program Awards

Allie Simpson and Dana Oster received Department of Ecology SEA Program awards.

Allie received the First Responder Award, which recognized her for her leadership in the European Green Crab response in Drayton Harbor.

Dana received the Outstanding Achievement Award for her leadership, determination, and successful completion of the Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan, which outlines goals and action items to conserve important marine habitat.

Thank you, Ron Thom!

Lucas announced that the October NW Straits Commission meeting is Ron's last official meeting. Lucas thanked Ron for his deep commitment to the Commission's mission over the last five years. Ron will stay in his appointment until a replacement is announced by the governor. He will remain engaged in the Science Advisory Committee beyond his term on the Commission.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) update

Cecilia Gobin reported that NWIFC has concluded the 2020 [State of the Watersheds](#) report. This report shows trends in watershed habitat and related stressors. She said that the report summarizes indicators that directly relate to salmon productivity.



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Cecilia reported that she is tracking two pieces of state legislation, an ecological benefits bill and carbon bill. Details are expected in the upcoming legislative session.

Cecilia said the Army Corps is taking action to renew all Nationwide Permits (NWP). The Army Corps is also proposing five new permits.

NWPs that NW Straits Commission may be interested in reviewing and commenting on:

- NWP 3, concerning maintenance of structures or fill in water or overwater (i.e. bulkheads, rip rap, docks etc.)
- NWP 13, concerning permitted bank stabilization activities
- NWP 10, concerning mooring buoys
- NWP 22, concerning removal of vessels
- Two NEW NWPs, concerning permitting activities of seaweed mariculture

Puget Sound Partnership Update

Laura Blackmore reported on the 2021 legislative session:

- Session begins January 11, 2021
- Legislature will adopt an operating budget for the 2021-2023 Biennium
- Legislature may adopt a capital budget, but it is not required
- State Dept. of Revenue aims to exempt habitat restoration grants from the Business & Occupation and retail sales and use taxes. This would need to be approved by the Governor and Office of Financial Management.

Laura provided the following Puget Sound Partnership updates:

- The Partnership is continuing the 2022-2026 Action Agenda update process. Commissioners are encouraged to participate. The next workshop is November 17.
- The Partnership has surrendered 15% of their state budget in light of the state budget difficulties this year. The Partnership will see the cuts in science, monitoring, and accountability departments.
- The Partnership received over 140 responses to a questionnaire regarding social marketing challenges. Results will inform how the Partnership supports partners with behavior change campaigns.
- The Partnership submitted two budget packages, one is for 1 full time position who will focus on diversity, equity and inclusion and environmental justice. The other position is related to Puget Sound Info data portal.

Northwest Straits Foundation Update

There was no update from the Northwest Straits Foundation.



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Washington Hatcheries Presentation

Ken Currens and Adrian Spidle from Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission presented about Washington Hatcheries. Ken and Adrian explained the legal, regulatory and scientific aspects of hatcheries management, including how hatcheries plan for and manage genetic risks.

MRC Reports

Clallam –

Alan reported that Clallam MRC has two new members - Ann Stafford and Alisa Hasbrouck. Alisa participated in the September meeting and both came to the October meeting. Alan said that the MRC extended the fellowship contract with Alisa Taylor for seven months. Alan reported that MRC members approved their 2020-21 educational outreach plan.

Island –

Elsa reported that Congressman Larsen visited two restoration sites, Seahorse Siesta and Sunlight Shores, to learn about the MRC's work. The MRC presented a proclamation to the Board of Island County Commissioners regarding Orca Recovery Day. Island County Commissioners passed a resolution which proclaimed October 17, 2020 Orca Recovery Day in Island County. Elsa reported that Lisa Hillier from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife will be conducting an on-the-beach training for new forage fish volunteers in November.

Jefferson –

Jeff Taylor reported that the MRC completed installation of the rain garden at Clay and Benton Streets in uptown Port Townsend. Jeff said that the no-anchor zone subcommittee replaced summer buoys in Port Townsend Bay to prepare for the winter conditions. Jeff reported that the MRC is establishing a new forage fish monitoring site in Dabob Bay.

San Juan –

Phil reported that MRC members met with Congressman Larsen on October 23 on San Juan Island. Phil said that planning is underway for the MRC's annual retreat. Phil reported that the San Juan County and MRC were successful in securing funding from Pew Charitable Trust to initiate a local Eelgrass Protection Initiative Consortium (EPIC) to increase the effectiveness of eelgrass protection and recovery. Phil reported that Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is seeking additional public feedback on [draft commercial whale watching rules](#). The public may submit written comments online through Dec. 5.

Skagit –

Sasha Horst reported that MRC members met with Congressman Larsen on October 14 at Padilla Bay to highlight the Kids on the Beach and Salish Sea Stewards programs. The Salish Sea Stewards held a virtual meeting on October 14.



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Snohomish –

Sarah Brown reported that the MRC met with Congressman Larsen and shared information with him about the Snohomish Estuary Pilings project. She said that the MRC has started Phase 2 and is currently working on hiring a consultant. Sarah reported that the Oil Spill Subcommittee attended volunteer training and submitted comments on the North Central Puget Sound Geographic Response Plan. The MRC, in partnership with Washington Department of Natural Resources, completed removal of four derelict boats which are now being processed for disposal.

Whatcom –

Bob Cecile reported that the MRC met with Congressman Larsen and Whatcom County Executive Satal Sidhu, representatives of Lummi Island Heritage Trust, and Northwest Straits Commission for a tour of the Aiston Preserve restoration site on Lummi Island. Bob reported that two 2020-21 MRC interns were hired as part time temporary Whatcom County employees. Bob said that Maya Garber-Yonts is the Forage Fish Survey intern and Mary Kirkpatrick-Waite is the North Sound Stewards Volunteer Coordinator intern.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

* The next regular Commission meeting will be on **Friday, December 11.***