



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



minutes

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



minutes

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



minutes

February 28, 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), Sarah Brown (Snohomish), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Tom Cowan, Ron Thom, Chris Castner, Jennifer Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership - alternate), Sarah Fisken (Jefferson - alternate), Nan McKay, Christina Koons (San Juan)

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

Others in Attendance: Caroline Gibson (Northwest Straits Foundation), Emily Grason (Washington Sea Grant)

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

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

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

NWS Commission - committee reports

Executive Committee

The committee discussed partnership opportunities with NOAA and other updates on recent topics such as the retreat.

External Relations Committee

External Relations Committee gave an update on the [Derelict Vessel Bill](#), which is moving forward in the Washington State Senate, and a bill regarding bulkhead replacement with soft shore techniques (SB6147). Lucas and Chris Castner met with NOAA and discussed opportunities for coordination and collaboration. Lucas will be in Washington, DC for Puget Sound Day on the Hill on April 28-29.

- Action: Caroline and Lucas will share the report with the assessment regarding bulkhead permitting.
 - [Net Change in Permitted Shoreline Armor](#), WA Department of Fish and Wildlife, October 2019.

Science Advisory Committee

The committee will meet in person in Tacoma on March 23 to plan their activities for the coming year. There are numerous conferences that might be of interest or relate to the Northwest Straits Initiative:

- [Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference](#) in Vancouver, B.C. April 19-22.
- [Columbia River Estuary Conference](#) in Astoria, OR. April 28-30.



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- [National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration](#) in Portland, OR, August 2-6.
- [National Coastal and Estuarine Summit](#), Providence, RI. October 4-8, 2020.

Ad hoc Communications Committee

The committee reported that the Request for Qualifications and Quotations for a communications audit and plan creation closes on March 4.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC)/Tribal update

There was no Tribal update at the meeting.

Business items

Retreat planning

The Northwest Straits Initiative Retreat will be on March 26-27 at Padilla Bay. Staff will distribute the full agenda by March 20 or March 23. Lucas sent questions to MRCs that will help guide a conversation about support needs, techniques for engaging volunteer leaders, and several other topics that relate to action items in the NWSC strategic plan. The deadline for responses is March 16. A few other agenda topics being considered by the planning committee include Northwest Straits Initiative role in climate change topics, innovative ideas on community engagement, and elected official engagement.

Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference sessions

Multiple MRCs will present their work or speak on panels during the conference. Northwest Straits Commission and Foundation will also present. The program with session abstracts is available online at <https://ssec.confex.com/ssec/2020/meetingapp.cgi>.

Ecosystem Coordinator hiring

NWS Commission staff are in the final stages of hiring for a temporary Ecosystem Project Coordinator position. That person is anticipated to begin in mid-March or early April. One of their tasks will be to coordinate the European Green Crab response in Drayton Harbor during Spring/Summer 2020.

Northwest Straits Initiative Conference: November 6-7

The Northwest Straits Initiative will hold our annual conference at Fort Worden on November 6-7, 2020. Please save the date!

Kelp Monitoring- Certification needs

NWS Commission staff are developing a more robust safety protocol for kelp monitoring work. Dana is working with Don and Caroline and others to find strategic partnerships for kayak trainings or certifications. If you have other ideas for ways Northwest Straits Initiative can provide trainings, or you know groups of people who have those certifications, reach out to Dana.

Kelp WebEx



minutes

The March 6 Kelp WebEx will focus on summarizing 2019 kelp data and MRCs reporting on their surveys. NWS Commission staff will also host an all-day workshop on May 6 to plan for the 2020 kelp survey season, discuss project goals, and hear updates from project partners. The Puget Sound Partnership's vital sign revision includes a proposed marine vegetation vital sign (that includes eelgrass and kelp) and the MRC data would contribute to the kelp canopy area indicator.

MRC Symposium

The Commission and Foundation will host an MRC Symposium at Padilla Bay on April 3. MRCs will have an opportunity to share projects they are working on and discuss how to strengthen or replicate projects with other MRCs.

Database development

Volunteer Richard Austin is continuing his work in developing the database. Richard has provided prototypes and staff provided feedback.

MRC contract amendments

The due date for MRC year two project proposals is April 10. Contact Sasha Horst for more information.

Northwest Straits (NWS) Foundation update

Caroline Gibson provided an update:

- The call for applications for the Opportunity Fund will be open soon. The application period will be open for 60 days. Contact Caroline Gibson for more information. This round of funding has \$20,000 total.
- Lisa Kaufman visited many MRCs and presented on the Shore Friendly Program.
- A new Director of Advancement is expected to start at the Foundation in March.
- Don Hunger is serving on the planning committee for the Northwest Straits Initiative Retreat.

Puget Sound Partnership (Partnership) update

Jennifer Grimm provided the following Partnership update:

- Puget Sound Day on the Hill is April 28-29 in Washington, DC.
- The EPA approved \$50,000 to Northwest Straits Commission via Puget Sound Partnership, which will support the Ecosystem Project Coordinator position's time coordinating the European Green Crab emergency response in Drayton Harbor during Spring/Summer 2020.

Green Crab Update

Emily Grason from Washington Sea Grant presented on their European Green Crab monitoring and management program. Acting early on Green Crab gives the best chance for efficient and effective management. Washington Sea Grant is working closely with various management agencies and is aiming to manage green crab while the population is still in "prevent and eradication" stages.



minutes

Puget Sound Partnership alternate for Laura Blackmore: Jennifer Grimm

The Commission moved and approved by consensus to appoint Jennifer Grimm as the alternate for Laura Blackmore of the Puget Sound Partnership.

MRC reports

Monthly reports for each MRC are available by visiting this link: <http://www.nwstraits.org/archive/>

Clallam

Alan said that City Councilmember Trisha Suggs is the new city representative on the MRC. There are still seats open on the MRC. Emily Grason from Washington Sea Grant presented on European green crab. The deadline for the spring internship program is March 9. The MRC will also have a video intern from Port Angeles High School, who will highlight the work of the MRC.

Island-

Elsa said that Hoypus Point and Possession Point restoration feasibility assessment is moving along. The MRC participated in the Great Northwest Glass Quest. Island MRC held a strategic planning retreat this month. Elsa urged other MRCs to take NWS Commission staff up on the offer to present the "Northwest Straits 101" presentation to their MRC.

Jefferson-

Jeff said that the MRC is adding a new index site for forage fish monitoring. Monica Montgomery is the new MRC lead staff member. WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife staff will train MRC members on new procedures with automated tools. The City of Port Townsend will update MRC on latest update on the sewer outflow project.

San Juan-

Christina said that the MRC is planning for the marine managers' workshop on March 10-11. There is one open position on the MRC. Karin presented at Sound Waters University regarding Plastic Free Salish Sea. The MRC gave away 60 whale warning flags at the Seattle Boat Show. Phil Green will serve as alternate to the Commission. The county has formed a subcommittee to explore alternative funding strategies for their county marine program. Christina sits on that committee.

Skagit

Pete said the MRC has given feedback to the retreat and symposium. The Salish Sea Stewards class begins March 10. Fidalgo Bay Day will be on August 29. The MRC will resume plant maintenance at Bowman Bay in the spring. The MRC is hosting a joint event at Bowman Bay as part of Skagit Water Week.

Snohomish

Sarah said the MRC has six new members, with a broad range of expertise. The MRC is identifying and prioritizing creosote pilings. The MRC co-hosted a starlight beach walk.



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Whatcom

Bob said the MRC has new members. Lisa Kaufman came to the February meeting to talk about the Shore Friendly program. The MRC has been working with BP Cherry Point and Department of Natural Resources to put in more interpretive signs at Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve. MRC members attended a meeting led by Washington SeaGrant and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to set up a management group to handle green crab in Drayton Harbor.

Round table

- Lucas mentioned that the Puget Sound Partnership is scoping several strategies for raising additional funds for Puget Sound recovery. This is part of their mobilizing funding campaign.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

- * The next regular Commission meeting will be on April 24 by WebEx. The Northwest Straits Initiative Retreat is on March 26-27 at Padilla Bay.*



minutes

March 27, 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, Ron Thom, Chris Castner, Jennifer Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership-alternate), Nan McKay, Christina Koons (San Juan), Tom Doerge (Snohomish-alternate)

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

Others in Attendance: Caroline Gibson (Northwest Straits Foundation). Sarah Fisker (Jefferson - alternate)

Absent: Cecilia Gobin (Tribal)

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

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

Director's Report

Commission operations in the face of COVID-19: COVID-19 is changing the way that the Northwest Straits Commission works, but the staff are busy as ever. Staff are adapting to new work from home policies, adapting to event cancellations and postponements, and examining virtual event options in order to reach our objectives.

Retreat Update: Lucas is working with Don Hunger from the NW Straits Foundation to plan a webinar around NWS Initiative operations plan updates, a topic originally planned for the retreat. Climate change is a second retreat topic staff are considering for a webinar.

Ecosystem Coordinator Hiring: Lucas extended an offer to Alexandra (Allie) Simpson, she will start on April 1. Allie's temporary position is anticipated to last through August 2021. Allie will be working on a variety of projects, including the Green Crab response in Drayton Harbor.

NWS Commission - committee reports

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee recommended Alan Clark be nominated as Commission Chair and Elsa Schwartz be nominated as Vice Chair. The Commission elections will be held at the April 24.

External Relations Committee



minutes

The External Relations Committee gave an update on work Chris Castner and Lucas are doing to explore collaborative opportunities with NOAA. WA Dept. of Ecology has a new Director and Deputy Director, and Lucas is setting up a meeting with them to introduce the Northwest Straits Initiative.

Science Advisory Committee

The Science Advisory Committee met via WebEx, instead of their previously planned in-person meeting. Dr. Kathleen Wolf, a social scientist at University of Washington, is a new committee member. She has expertise with the links between human well-being with environmental health. The committee focused on developing a path forward on the Actions to Impacts project. The committee is strategizing on steps to take by developing proof-of-concept examples using select MRC project examples.

Ad hoc Communications Committee

The Communications Committee reviewed proposals from firms who responded to the Request for Qualifications and Quotations for the communications audit and plan development project. Sasha is working on completing the process for contractor onboarding. Staff anticipates work will begin in May.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC)/Tribal update

No update.

Business items

MRC Grants: Sasha has been working with MRC staff to prepare Year 2 grant agreements. Proposals/Amendments are due April 10. MRCs need to spend Year 1 state funds by the end of June.

NWSI Conference: Commission and Foundation staff have changed the Conference date by one week, to November 13-14 and the location to the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend, WA.

NWS Commission Meetings: Commission staff have switched the locations of May and August meetings. Pending the COVID-19 situation, the May Commission meeting will be in Snohomish County and the August meeting will be in San Juan. Exact location pending.

Northwest Straits (NWS) Foundation update

Caroline Gibson provided an update:

- The Foundation offices closed 2 weeks ago, all staff are working remotely. They also implemented a hiring freeze in light of the COVID-19 situation, and canceled all other public events until further notice.
- Foundation staff issued a call for applications for the Opportunity Fund at the beginning of March. The deadline is May 8. Interested MRCs should demonstrate the need for funding a project or activity that's ready to roll. Contact Caroline Gibson for questions related to the Opportunity Fund.



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- The Foundation released the first episode of the [Salish SeaFresh](#) series, a video series bringing awareness to the connection between sustainable seafood and marine ecosystem health.
- Lisa is exploring options for web-based Shore Friendly workshops.
- Foundation staff are continuing to plan for Orca forums in Island, Whatcom, and Skagit counties. Contact Caroline with suggestions for speakers, content or venues. Caroline is planning these for June-July.

Puget Sound Partnership (Partnership) update

Jennifer Grimm provided the following Partnership update:

- The Partnership has postponed Puget Sound Day on the Hill. They will consider rescheduling the event.
- The Partnership has [finalized the sign-on letter to Congress](#) and are seeking signatures from leading organizations. To be included as an official signatory to the letter, please provide the requested information at [this link](#) by April 14, 2020.

Kelp Plan Update

Dana Oster from Northwest Straits Commission presented on the Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan. NW Straits Commission will release the plan during the week of March 30, 2020.

The six strategic goals of the plan are:

- Understand and reduce kelp stressors;
- Improve understanding of the value of kelp to Puget Sound ecosystems and integrate into management;
- Describe kelp distribution and trends;
- Designate kelp protected areas;
- Restore kelp forests;
- Promote awareness, engagement, and action from user groups, Tribes, the public, and decision-makers.

Successes of the plan thus far:

- DNR has committed to leading a kelp research and monitoring forum and a policy and management forum for the next two years.
- In the Puget Sound Partnerships vital sign revision effort, MRC kelp surveys along with DNR and Samish Indian Nation kelp data are being proposed as a kelp canopy indicator to support a marine vegetation vital sign (depending on final vital sign count and approval from the Leadership Council).
- Fostered collaboration between agencies, organizations, and citizens that have a stake in kelp conservation and recovery.

Challenges moving forward:

- No funding for any agency to dedicate a staff member to coordinate implementation and to monitor progress of the plan.



- Maintain the momentum of the report and partners who have collaborated on it, and ensure implementation of the plan.

MRC reports

Monthly reports for each MRC are available by visiting this link: <http://www.nwstraits.org/archive/>

Clallam

Alan said that the MRC reviewed projects for their 2020-21 grant at their March meeting. Members of the MRC have interviewed candidates for their MRC intern programs. Members of the Climate Change subcommittee are reaching out to county commissioners to set up meetings, but that effort is on hold in the wake of COVID-19.

Island

Elsa said that Island County Commissioners have suspended all advisory committees under the Dept. of Natural Resources, which includes the MRC. All MRC activities, including April MRC meetings, have been suspended.

Jefferson

Jeff said that MRC activities have been curtailed significantly by COVID-19.

San Juan

Christina said the MRC is continuing Southern Resident Killer Whale outreach (including Be Whale Wise and Whale Tales curriculum). The MRC is considering how to modify outreach for this spring and summer. The MRC is developing a website for Plastic Free Salish Sea. The MRC hosted the Marine Managers' Workshop on March 10-11 at Friday Harbor Labs.

Skagit

Pete said the MRC hosted the first session of the Salish Sea Stewards before they had to cancel in-person meetings. The MRC is working to set up digital meetings so that the Salish Sea Stewards program can continue digitally.

Snohomish

Tom said the MRC has transitioned to remote meetings. Elisa Dawson has been hired for the full time position as lead MRC staff member. Snohomish County has not yet rehired the half time position that Elisa vacated. The MRC is continuing the pilings prioritization project.

Whatcom

Bob said students from Western Washington University presented at their March meeting on their analysis of MRC projects. Dr. Brooke Love leads the collaboration between the students and the MRC. The Climate Impact Committee will speak during the MRC's Speaker Series in April.



minutes

Round table

- Dana said that there is interest from the MRCs about revamping the Symposium in some way because MRCs want to hear about other projects. Dana will work on a solution to address the interest from the MRCs.
- Lucas gave thanks to the commission staff for excellent work under ever-changing conditions.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

* The next regular Commission meeting will be on April 24 by WebEx.*



minutes

April 24, 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, Ron Thom, Chris Castner, Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Nan McKay, Christina Koons (San Juan), Sarah Brown (Snohomish)

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

Others in Attendance: Senator Liz Lovelett, Don Hunger (Northwest Straits Foundation), Jennifer Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership – Alternate), Caroline Gibson (Northwest Straits Foundation)

Absent: Cecilia Gobin (Tribal)

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

Legislative Update

Senator Liz Lovelett gave an update on two bills she sponsored:

- Antifouling paints on recreational water vessels ([SB 6210](#)): This bill creates a path forward for phasing out copper-based boat paints in light of new information showing that non-copper alternatives may be more harmful to the environment. Bill report can be found [here](#).
- Prevention of derelict vessels ([SB 6528](#)): This bill addresses derelict vessels by improving vessel owner accountability, removing the spending limit for the Dept. of Natural Resources' Derelict Vessel Removal Program and clearing DNR to carry out a pilot program for vessel recycling. However, funding for the recycling program was not allocated. Bill report can be found [here](#).

Senator Lovelett is focused on three additional areas:

- Carbon pricing and low carbon fuel standards,
- Hybridize and electrify our ferry system, and
- Land use planning - regional modeling for integrating climate resiliency into land use planning.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the March Northwest Straits (NWS) Commission meeting were approved by consensus, with one edit:

- Jefferson MRC is not having WebEx meetings yet.

NWS Commission - committee reports

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee would like to hold off on moving forward with joining the Billy Frank Jr. Coalition at this time. The Committee recommended hosting speakers on the topics of hatcheries and pinnipeds, two main focus areas of the coalition, to provide education on their importance to salmon restoration and treaty rights.



External Relations Committee

Tom Cowan noted that due to the restrictions related to COVID-19, scheduling of planned meetings is delayed.

Science Advisory Committee

The Science Advisory Committee has chosen two projects- kelp and forage fish- to use as tests for the Actions to Impacts methodology. The Committee's next meeting is mid-May.

Ad hoc Communications Committee

The Communications Committee secured a contract with Maul Foster & Alongi, the consultant team who will be helping the Commission with the development of a communications plan. The consultants will be attending the retreat webinar on April 30. Katie reported that some Commissioners will be asked for an interview for their input in the Communications Plan.

Items for Commission decision

Chair and Vice Chair appointments: Nan McKay presented Alan Clark as the nominee for Chair and Elsa Schwartz the nominee for Vice Chair.

- The recommendations for Chair and co-chair passed by consensus.

Rules of Procedure: The Commission previously approved a legislative comment process in late 2019. The Commission was presented with the full rules of procedure document for review and confirmation, which includes the updated legislative comment process.

- The adoption of the rules of procedure passed by consensus.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC)/Tribal update

No update.

Business items

Webinar retreat reminder: Lucas announced that the retreat, which will include Commissioners and members of the board of directors from the NWS Foundation, will be held on April 30.

European green crab in Drayton Harbor: Allie explained that she has established four priority sites and drafted a scope of work for Drayton Harbor. She is working on volunteer liability and working on drafting land access permission forms for landowners to approve shoreline access. She is working with WDFW and Washington Sea Grant on this project. The timeline for starting field work is uncertain because of COVID-19. Allie reported that Sea Grant and Lummi Nation have done some monitoring.



minutes

Virtual MRC Symposium series: Dana reported that the first of the Virtual MRC Symposium took place this week, which featured Jefferson MRC. Presenters from the MRC shared about their MRC structure and highlighted a few key projects that the MRC has done. Dana invited Commissioners to watch the recording of the session, which NWS Commission staff will share via link, and to join for the remaining three sessions.

MRC project presentations to Commission / WebEx May Commission Meeting: Lucas reported that the Commission staff is lining up four MRCs to present their projects during the May meeting and three MRCs to present their projects during the June meeting.

Operations plan update: Lucas explained that NWS Commission staff did the final quarterly review of the annual operations plan (which is the step-by-step version of the strategic plan). Some highlights include completion of the Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan and additional staff support for a few MRCs. NWS Commission staff will be updating the operations plan for the upcoming year, and will continue to do quarterly reviews.

Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) update

Don Hunger provided an update:

- NWS Foundation staff are developing a number of communications pieces, including an Adobe Spark presentation about the Shore Friendly project and the second Salish Sea Fresh video. Staff considering developing a video series for the crabber outreach program.
- The Foundation has closed the Opportunity Fund. Contact Don Hunger (Don@nwstraitsfoundation.org) with questions.
- The Foundation is working with the Commission staff to develop a unified training program for kayak safety training for kelp monitoring. The training workshop will be online.

Puget Sound Partnership (Partnership) update

Laura Blackmore and Jenn Grimm provided the following Partnership update:

- The Partnership staff will be teleworking through the end of May, all meetings will be virtual through the end of June.
- The Partnership coordinated a letter to send to Washington State's congressional delegation in regards to a natural resources stimulus package.
- The Partnership sent the Puget Sound Day on the Hill sign-on letter to the Washington congressional delegation. 97 organizations signed onto the letter.

MRC reports

Monthly reports for each MRC are available by visiting this link: <http://www.nwstraits.org/archive/>



minutes

Whatcom

Bob said that they have two speakers coming to address the MRC in May who will talk about how COVID-19 has effected the fishing industry, and a speaker who will talk about sea star wasting disease. The MRC is working with the NWS Commission, WDFW and Sea Grant on the European green crab response in Drayton Harbor.

Snohomish

Sarah said the MRC has transitioned to remote meetings. The MRC has completed the creosote pilings prioritization framework. MRC members continue to work on existing projects, including culvert replacement feasibly at Pigeon Creek. MRC members have received many reports of derelict boats through the MyCoast app.

Skagit

Pete and the Skagit MRC are continuing the Salish Sea Stewards class online. Fidalgo Bay Day is still scheduled for late August. Skagit MRC signed up for the May 7 session of the Virtual MRC Symposium.

San Juan

Christina said that two temporary research assistants have been hired. The MRC is compiling information from the Marine Managers' Workshop and are including findings in the Marine Stewardship Area Plan. The MRC is developing toolkits for Plastic Free Salish Sea. The MRC was surprised to learn that Opportunity Fund contracts were being cancelled.

Jefferson

Jeff said that the MRC presented during the first session of the Virtual MRC Symposium series. The MRC has been onboarding new members.

Island

Elsa said that the Island County Commissioners has given the MRC clearance to meet via WebEx.

Clallam

Alan said that the MRC has hired interns for smolt trap internships.

Round table

There were no round table items.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

* The next regular Commission meeting will be on May 29 by WebEx.*



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.*



minutes

June 26, 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), Nan McKay, Ron Thom, Jennifer Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership – Alternate), Christina Koons (San Juan)

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

Others in Attendance: Anna Toledo (Island), Austin Rose (Whatcom), Barbara Bennett (Island), Frances Robertson (San Juan), Ed Halloran (Island), Don Hunger (Northwest Straits Foundation), Caroline Gibson (Northwest Straits Foundation), Neil Harrington (Jefferson), Monica Montgomery (Jefferson), Kate Elliott (Maul Foster and Alongi), Sidney Counts (Maul Foster and Alongi)

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 May 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 that all virtual Commission meetings previously planned to be in-person be extended to three hours to assure there is enough time to cover all topics.

External Relations Committee

Tom Cowan reported that the Committee discussed an overall budget defense strategy due to the economic downturn. This includes working on collaborative opportunities with federal partners. Separate from budget discussions, the committee talked about building partnerships with tribes, such as through re-establishment of the tribal committee and focusing on projects that involve tribes. In addition, the Committee considered how to create connections with business interests, including maritime industries (Blue Marine), and understand the need for strengthening relationships with county councils/commissions throughout the NW Straits. MRCs: please let the External Relations Committee know if you would like support in strengthening key relationships.

Science Advisory Committee

Ron Thom reported that the Committee is focused on measuring our social impacts as well as ecological impacts through the actions to impacts project. This is an expanded vision beyond just net ecosystem improvement (the original focus). The expanded scope recognizes and includes the broad direct and indirect cumulative benefits of the projects MRCs carry out, as well as the unique bottom up Initiative



model that supports the MRCs. The Committee's next step is to outline a framework and anticipated outputs from the model developed. The Committee's next meeting is July 1.

Budget review and year two MRC projects

Last June the Commission approved a two-year budget. Lucas outlined some revisions to the budget since that time, including an increase in \$50K for green crab work in year two, a \$2,000 increase per MRC from the year one grant amount, an increase in Commission staff FTE which covers Allie's time on green crab, and additional coordination support with funds that were originally planned for database creation.

The Commission approved the revised budget by consensus, allowing for flexibility for minor adjustments based on the pending federal approval of Ecology's indirect rate.

The Commission also approved the year two MRC projects by consensus.

Director's Report

Commission Staff are being furloughed one day per week in July, and one day per month through November. Furloughs apply regardless of the source of funding for staff positions, which are federal funds.

NWS Commission Meetings in person: August is tentatively planned for San Juan, but the Executive Committee will discuss that meeting and future plans for in-person meetings. Lucas described some key considerations before meeting in person:

- NWS Commission staff would need to be cleared for travel by Ecology.
- All counties should be in Phase 4 of the Washington Safe Start plan (able to protect high risk populations).
- Members of the Commission need to be comfortable with meeting in person.

The Commission can also consider intermediate steps toward in person meetings, such as hybrid in-person/virtual meetings when the time is right.

MRC Representative Reports to the Commission: With shortened virtual meeting times, there is less time available for Commission business. To maximize efficiency, the Executive Committee recommended MRC representatives to verbally share two or three highlights from their monthly reports. An updated MRC report template will include a section for those highlights. All Commissioners are encouraged to read the full written report of each MRC. This is an experiment that we'd like to try starting in July, and MRC representatives are encouraged to share feedback so that we can continue to fine tune the virtual meetings and ensure MRCs are able to share their work effectively.



minutes

Zoom meetings: We will now use Zoom for Commission meetings, which offers better functionality and the ability to do breakout groups. Some meetings may continue to be hosted with our WebEx account.

Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan: We released the Kelp Plan in early June. Some notable outcomes so far have been:

- Over 500 page views of the kelp plan webpage
- EPA section 10 requested a presentation for staff on the NWS Commission and Kelp Plan work
- Pew Charitable Trust signed onto the vision statement, and are scheduling a meeting with Lucas and Dana to talk about kelp focused work and strategy.
- The Commission received positive responses and thanks from Governor Inslee's office, as well as Reps. Jayapal and Schrier's staff.

A key gap that was identified was lack of status and trends. Our kelp monitoring helps to fill that gap. That will be the Commission's primary focus. NW Straits Commission also acts as a "traffic director" for information requests in regards to kelp research.

The Commission has a strong relationship with the Foundation on kelp monitoring. The Commission needs additional funds to move some of the recommendations in the plan forward.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is committed to the next two years coordination of policy/planning and research (two different departments).

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC)/Tribal update

Cecilia Gobin shared the June 2020 Marine Conditions Bulletin from NWIFC in advance of the meeting.

Puget Sound Partnership update

Jenn Grimm reported that the PUGET SOS is in the Senate Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) and the House infrastructure package, which would authorize up to \$50M/year for five years for Puget Sound recovery efforts, would create a Puget Sound office within EPA, make the Federal Task Force permanent. The Senate version of the WRDA bill also contains provisions from PUGET SOS, including the \$50M/year authorization.

The Puget Sound Days on the Hill are virtual events. The next sessions will be June 26 (with Senator Murray, Senator Cantwell's staff, and Rep Smith's senior staff) and July 10 (conversation with Representatives McMorris, Rodgers, Larsen, and DelBene). More information here:

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

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

Don Hunger reported that the Foundation is at the end of their fiscal year. He praised the Foundation board and staff for their adaptability. Don reported that more than 200 people attended the crabber outreach workshop, which was held virtually. Foundation staff are developing a number of videos. The Foundation has created a visioning strategy that Don will share with the Commission.

MRC Project Presentations

Jefferson – Olympia oyster restoration

Neil Harrington presented on the MRC's project to restore Olympia oysters. Neil described the enhancement efforts the MRC leads at Discovery Bay, which includes spreading oyster shell for Olympia oyster to "land" on, and monitoring the oyster population. The MRC is examining additional sites at Mystery Bay and Dabob Bay for possible additional plots.

Island – MRC Communications and needs assessment

Barbara Bennett presented on the MRC's communications and needs assessment. The MRC completed a needs assessment in 2016 – 2017, which identified the need for a communications plan for the MRC. Some of their outcomes were that outreach is a dialogue, and needs to be strategic and tailored. The MRC's communication plan is here: <https://www.islandcountymrc.org/media/19408/2020-mrc-communications-plan.pdf>

San Juan- Community based efforts for Southern Resident killer whale (SRKW) conservation

Frances Robertson explained that the County hosted a workshop in 2017 that provided key input into the Governor's Killer Whale Task Force and other local and regional efforts. Frances also explained the introduction of the Whale Warning flag, and the partnership with the Soundwatch boater education program. Frances explained how the MRC determined compliance rates. Frances reported that the MRC is identifying high priority SRKW foraging habitat for a dedicated marine spatial planning effort. The MRC released the [Whale Warning flag report](#) in April 2020.

Communications Audit + Plan

Kate Elliott from Maul, Foster and Alongi (MFA) explained the overall scope and timeline of the project. Kate reviewed the findings from the communications audit and interviews. She identified key challenges, including confusion regarding roles and responsibilities within the Initiative, and lack of internal shared baseline knowledge about Northwest Straits, as well as inconsistent voice and formatting across communications platforms.

The Commissioners discussed what resonated with and/or surprised them about the findings.

- Some people were not surprised, saw clearly communicating about our identity as a fundamental challenge.
- People have different levels of experience of knowledge and there was still a lot of confusion regarding roles and responsibilities.



minutes

- There are commonalities across the organization. Some felt that explaining why there are differences would be helpful.
- Helping onboarding for new members and explaining what resources are available to them.

Kate outlined one key challenge: lack of internal shared baseline knowledge about Northwest Straits and confusion between the arms of the organization:

- Similar names
- Some overlapping work (projects)
- Different work focus areas

The attendees broke out into small groups and discussed the roles of the Foundation and the Commission using the following prompts:

- Was it easy or difficult to describe the roles and responsibilities of the Foundation and the Commission?
- Was it easy or difficult to understand the roles and responsibilities of the Foundation and the Commission?
- If you found it difficult to describe or understand, why do you think that was the case?
- Other thoughts from your discussion groups.
- What actions would you recommend for improving understanding about roles and responsibilities?

Responses to these prompts, and recommendations from the Commission will be integrated into the final audit report and communications plan.

Round table

There were no round table items.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

* The next regular Commission meeting will be on July 31.*



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



minutes

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.*



minutes

August 28, 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, Sarah Brown (Snohomish), Christina Koons (San Juan), Nan McKay, Ron Thom, Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership- Alternate), Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Chris Castner

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

Others in Attendance: Kate Elliott (Maul Foster and Alongi), Sidney Counts (Maul Foster and Alongi), Nicole Naar (NOAA), Emily Buckner, Monica Montgomery (Jefferson MRC), Kristin Hayman (Puget Sound Partnership), Alexandra Doty (Puget Sound Partnership), Austin Rose (Whatcom MRC)

Absent: Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership)

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

Approval of Minutes

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

NW Straits Commission Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Elsa presented the Draft Match Policy for Commission approval. This policy addresses the steps MRCs should take when considering the use of Commission funds for match on third-party grants. The Commission approved the policy by consensus.

External Relations Committee

Tom Cowan reported that the committee did not meet in August. Commission staff continue to identify opportunities to partner with NOAA.

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 International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification, and how the MRCs work ties into the Alliance's work. The Committee prepared a memo that they will send to the Executive Committee in September. Ron is also working with the Washington State Academy of Sciences panel regarding noise and killer whales.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) update



minutes

Cecilia Gobin reported that she and Lucas are working on getting speakers from NWIFC about hatcheries and pinnipeds. Cecilia reported that the updated [State of Our Watersheds Report](#) is scheduled to be released in November or December. Cecilia is responding to a proposed rule that would add a new definition of “habitat” to the Endangered Species Act. Comment period closes September 4, 2020.

Business Updates

MRC Symposium feedback

Dana Oster explained that there were 150 people who attended and participated in the Symposium series and gave very positive overall feedback from the sessions. Dana is leading upcoming staff discussions on collaboration between the MRCs as we continue to work from home.

County budgets discussion

Clallam: Alan reported that the lodging tax revenue is down 90%. They are looking at a “major hole” in terms of county budgets. Businesses are struggling in Clallam County.

Island: Elsa shared that Island County does not know what their budget situation will be next year.

San Juan: Christina reported that the funding for the county marine program is fine for the next year, but they don’t know for the following year.

Skagit: Pete explained that most of the county support they receive is from the clean water tax. It is small per parcel and usually renewed without much push back.

Snohomish: Sarah said that the surface water county budget is not impacted. However, there is a hiring freeze, which has affected the staff support to the MRC.

Jefferson: Jeff said that there are no current threats to the funding, but they will continue to look into it.

Whatcom: Bob reported that MRC staffing budget is stable through 2021.

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 related to the update.

Kristin Hayman and Alexandra Doty presented about the Partnership’s approach to social approaches. The Partnership is trying to determine how they can help their partners, including MRCs, in social approaches (including how to change people’s behaviors and attitudes). They are looking for the barriers and challenges that partners are facing as they implement projects or campaigns designed to change attitudes and behaviors. Kristin will send a questionnaire intended for the MRCs, through the Commission, on September 10.

Environmental Benefits and Risks of Kelp Aquaculture

Nicole Naar and Emily Buckner from NOAA presented NOAA’s recent research about kelp aquaculture.



minutes

Communications Audit + Plan

Kate Elliott from Maul, Foster and Alongi (MFA) shared the elevator pitch:

Key Messages

Kate walked the Commissioners through the concept of key messages, which should answer the question "If there is one thing I want my audience to know, what would that be?" There should be no more than three or four key messages and they should be clear and concise.

Messages should be relevant to all arms of the organization and all MRCs. Commissioners broke into small groups to discuss: What concepts do we want to get across in our key messages? What are your top priorities?

Example concepts:

- Bottom up approach
- Regional environmental health
- Impact within the conservation effort
- Uniquely positioned within county governments to help inform decision-making

Tools

How are you going to learn these messages, and be able to communicate them effectively? What has worked for you in the past to learn about the Initiative? Examples include:

- Onboarding
- Communications matrix
- Communications plan fact sheet
- MRC Symposium sessions
- NW Straits Initiative Conference
- Monthly Commission meetings
- MRC Lead Staff Meeting
- Newsletter

MRC Reports

Clallam –

Alan Clark reported that the MRC had an online intern celebration on August 17. Alan said the MRC is doing educational outreach to Boys & Girls Club in Port Angeles. MRC members met with Commissioner Randy Johnson on August 14.

Island –



minutes

Elsa reported that the MRC announced the winners of the Design Your Own Salish Sea Creature art contest, in partnership with Sound Water Stewards. The winning entries are posted on the MRC website. MRC volunteers documented Pacific sand lance feeding in a kelp bed. This video and many more are available on the MRC's kelp webpage. The MRC is planning an outreach needs assessment to understand how the MRC can help address the needs of the community in regards to outreach about marine resources.

Jefferson –

Jeff Taylor reported that five MRC members did Olympia oyster monitoring at Discovery Bay and five members did reconnaissance at Dabob Bay. The MRC concluded that the Dabob site visited has plenty of oysters and won't need any restoration efforts. Four MRC volunteers did a third kelp survey in August. They're finding the kelp bed taking a different shape this year. A masters student focusing his project on doing drone surveys for kelp monitoring has been tagging along and taking videos and photos and can georeference the perimeter to compare with the volunteers' data. The MRC is finalizing edits on Olympia oyster and eelgrass videos with the local videographer.

San Juan-

Christina reported that the MRC continued efforts to spread the Be Whale Wise messaging through signage installation. The MRC has started community value data collection regarding human use and management of Southern Resident Killer Whale foraging habitat. Christina reported that progress continues for the Marine Stewardship Area (MSA) biodiversity conservation targets. Abigail Ames is leading the MSA Plan update efforts. Abigail will be presenting her work at the September MRC meeting. County staff have been working to address progress of the strategies identified in the original plan.

Skagit-

Pete Haase reported that forage fish surveys started up again in August. MRC members are conducting more extensive surveys at Bowman Bay. Pete said that Skagit Valley College is working on a forage fish survey video with the help of the forage fish survey crew. Pete reported that Fidalgo Bay Day has gone virtual as a scavenger hunt! Event organizers will launch the Scavenger Hunt on September 1.

Snohomish-

Sarah Brown reported the MRC received feedback from partners and made edits to the draft Snohomish Prioritization of Pillings for Removal report. The final report will be made available in September and a press release is planned for the project in September. The MRC will focus on high-priority areas and additional conversations with stakeholders in Phase 2 of the project. The MRC has partnered with DNR to do marine vegetation mapping of the Snohomish Estuary. The MRC collected data in late July, and will complete a report later this fall. The MRC continues to support derelict vessel work around the county and assist other agencies who have derelict vessels on their property. Snohomish County is working on a contract to remove four vessels from the estuary this fall.

Whatcom-



minutes

Bob Cecile reported that the MRC hosted a [virtual European green crab forum](#) on August 12. The webinar was targeted to Drayton Harbor residents but suitable for anyone in the region to learn about green crabs. The goal of the forum was to inform the public on why green crabs are an issue, how to identify and report them, and how green crabs are being managed in Drayton Harbor. The MRC is planning to hold a virtual retreat in early 2021. The goals of the retreat are project planning (considering COVID-19), addressing member engagement and capacity, and alignment of MRC activities with goals and mission.

Round table

There were no items for round table.

Public comment

There was an inquiry about how Commission meetings are publicized. Commission staff reported that agendas and materials are published to the website in advance.

* The next regular Commission meeting will be on Thursday, September 24.*



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 Fisker (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). 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**.*



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.



minutes

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.



minutes

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.



minutes

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.***



minutes

December 11, 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), Christina Koons (San Juan), Tom Cowan, Ron Thom, Chris Castner, Nan McKay

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

Others in Attendance: Caroline Gibson (NW Straits Foundation), Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Tom Mumford (Science Advisory Committee), Kathy Wolf (Science Advisory Committee)

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

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

Approval of Minutes

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

Actions to Impacts

Dana Oster and the Science Advisory Committee gave an update on the Actions to Impacts diagram. Dana explained that the diagram is a conceptual model that illustrates the connection between recovery and protection actions and effects on ecosystem elements and functions.

The purpose of the diagram is to improve understanding of our work by:

- Serving as a communication tool for internal and external audiences
- Providing a visual representation of the broad benefits of the NW Straits framework
- Creating a high level qualitative assessment of MRC actions and benefits
- Demonstrating linkages of ecological and social benefits to MRC work

Dana discussed how the Science Advisory Committee will use feedback from the Commission to refine the diagram and then help MRCs apply the model to their work.

NW Straits Commission Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Elsa reported that Commission staff are working on a variety of funding avenues. The committee discussed the Commission-Foundation Memorandum of Understanding, which the Commission approved at the October Commission meeting. Elsa reported that the committee is working with Commission staff on providing support and guidance to MRCs in regard to evaluating outreach and education projects.



Business Items

Approval of the 2021 Meeting Schedule

Lucas presented the 2021 calendar of Northwest Straits Commission meetings and events. He reported that the Northwest Straits Commission is waiting to make the decision on the NWSI Retreat, which is usually held in March, until staff and Commission have more information in regards to COVID-19. The Commission approved the meeting schedule.

Eelgrass no-anchor zone grant update

Dana reported that the Commission did not receive the Coastal Watershed Grant for expanding the voluntary no-anchor zones into four additional counties. Commission staff are pursuing ways to carry this work forward while also collaborating with a transboundary workgroup to align no-anchor zone messaging and project planning.

Communications plan update

Katie reported that the consultants from Maul, Foster and Alongi delivered the final communications plan at the end of November. Katie explained that some of the first products that have come out of the initial findings are a one-pager fact sheet (with elevator pitch and key messages), the Commission org chart, and NWSI 101 presentations. Katie reported that she will use the findings and recommendations from the communications plan to update Commission communications processes and products.

Org chart

Katie explained that the org chart is intended to provide clarity on the structure of the Commission. It will be included in Northwest Straits Initiative 101 presentations and on-boarding for Commissioners.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion guide

Allie is developing a guide on how to recruit more diverse interns, and best practices for supporting more diversity in marine science.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) update

There was no update from the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.

Puget Sound Partnership Update

Ron Thom announced the acceptance of the new vital signs and indicators. He said that the draft report was approved by the Partnership's Leadership Council and expected to be released in January 2021.

Northwest Straits Foundation Update

Don Hunger reported that the Foundation virtual Holiday Party will be December 17. Don reported that the Foundation is planning a meeting for MRC chairs and MRC lead staff. The meeting will focus on strengthening the relationship between the Foundation and MRCs.



MRC Reports

Whatcom –

Bob Cecile reported that the MRC elected officers for 2021. Leadership will remain the same as 2020. Bob said that Whatcom MRC has two pending vacancies. Whatcom MRC will have a virtual retreat in January or February.

Snohomish –

Sarah Brown reported that Snohomish County hired a new planner, Alex Pittman, to assist the MRC half time. The MRC secured ESA as the consultant for Phase 2 of the Snohomish Estuary Piling Project. Sarah reported that Tim Ellis will be the Northwest Straits Commission representative for Snohomish County.

Skagit –

Pete Haase said that the MRC heard a presentation about seabed mining. Pete reported that there is a call for proposals for Padilla Bay Reserve's Storming the Sound event. Interested individuals should contact Susan Wood (swood@padillabay.gov), who is coordinating the planning committee for the event.

San Juan –

Christina Koons reported:

- The MRC continues to expand their Plastic Free Salish Sea campaign, with new features added to the [website](#).
- The MRC has been working with the Waggoner Guide to add information about Be Whale Wise and other conservation tips into their Boater's Guide.
- The MRC is continuing to engage in the whale watching licensing discussions. Dr. Frances Robertson (MRC lead staff) developed a staff report that received signatures from County Commissioners and was sent as formal comment to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

Jefferson –

Jeff Taylor reported that the MRC appointed Brenda Johnson as new vice-chair. Post-restoration monitoring at Fort Townsend State Park will continue.

Island –

Elsa reported:

- Island MRC did an on-the-beach training for nine new forage fish volunteers.
- Seahorse Siesta restoration is continuing.
- Volunteer monitoring activities have been suspended, based on direction from the County (in response to COVID-19).



minutes

Clallam –

Alan reported:

- Clallam MRC approved their 2021 work plan.
- The MRC is planning a “Kelp 101” webinar.
- MRC Lead Staff, Helle Anderson, is retiring at the end of the year.

Round table

Pete provided an update on Skagit MRC’s involvement with restoration of the Tommy Thompson Trail.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

* The next regular Commission meeting will be on **Friday, January 29.***