



minutes

January 29, 2021 • 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), Paul Dinnel (Skagit-Alt), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Christina Koons (San Juan), Tom Cowan, Julia Parrish, Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership- Alt)

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

Others in Attendance: Caroline Gibson (NW Straits Foundation), Heidi Eisenhour (Jefferson County Board of Commissioners), Alisa Taylor (Clallam MRC), Monica Montgomery (Jefferson MRC), Cathy Lear (Clallam MRC)

Absent: Nan McKay, Chris Castner, Cecilia Gobin (Tribal)

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

Approval of Minutes

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

Welcome from Heidi Eisenhour

Jefferson County Commissioner Heidi Eisenhour thanked the NW Straits Commission for the continued focus on marine conservation and community science. Heidi was elected to the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners in November 2020 and has been appointed to committees focused on recreation, solid waste, and natural resources, in addition to being appointed to the Jefferson MRC.

Director's Report

- Lucas Hart introduced two new Commissioners: Julia Parrish, gubernatorial appointee and Tim Ellis, representative from Snohomish MRC.
- Lucas reported that MRC Request for Proposals for the 2021-2023 project period will be issued in mid-March.
- Commission staff is working with Cecilia Gobin on a tribal acknowledgement for the Northwest Straits Commission.

Business Items

Communications Plan

Katie Harris provided an update on the Northwest Straits Communication Plan. She explained the communications processes that the Commission is doing well, areas for improvement, and new procedural elements, including the Initiative elevator pitch and key messages, and a diagram explaining the relationships between the Commission, Foundation, and MRCs. Commission staff will hold the NW Straits



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Initiative 101 presentation on a semi-annual to quarterly basis to help new members of the Initiative gain a better understanding of NW Straits Initiative history, structure, and goals.

Kelp Season Recap

Dana Oster provided a summary of the 2020 bull kelp monitoring data. Dana provided a recap of the 2020 MRC Kelp Review held on January 21, which was attended by more than 50 MRC members, lead staff, and project volunteers. Dana offered to present the kelp monitoring data to individual MRCs.

NW Straits Commission Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Elsa reported that the committee is recommending postponing or rescheduling the annual NW Straits Initiative Retreat. The Committee will meet with the Foundation's Executive Committee on February 24 for a joint session.

External Relations

Tom Cowan reported that the Commission's state funding was included in the Governor's budget for the 2021-2023 biennium.

Science Advisory Committee

Dana reported that the committee has integrated the Commission's feedback from the December meeting into the Actions to Impacts graphic. Julia Parrish is the new chair of the committee. Kathy Wolf will serve on the Committee for the next six months. Tessa Francis is rejoining the committee.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) update

No update was provided.

Puget Sound Partnership Update

Jenn Grimm reported that Puget Sound Day on the Hill will be virtual in 2021. The events will begin in April. The Leadership Council is seeking nominations to the Puget Sound Partnership's Science Panel. Nominations are due by March 31, 2021. More information can be found [here](#).

Northwest Straits Foundation Update

Caroline Gibson reported that the Northwest Straits Foundation held a workshop titled "Working Together for the Salish Sea" on January 21. The workshop was with MRC lead staff members and MRC Chairs and addressed how the Foundation functions and what support they can provide to MRCs.

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark reported the following:

- The members approved the 2020-21 MRC workplan.



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- Clallam MRC will be working with Tom Mumford on a Kelp 101 webinar on February 24.
- The climate change subcommittee plans to meet with Dept. of Community Development Director Winborn, Karen Affeld at North Olympic Development Council, and Rich Meier at Clallam County.

Island – Elsa Schwartz reported the following:

- The full report on the 2020 bull kelp monitoring season is available on the MRC website.
- The MRC partnered with Sound Water Stewards to host a training on the MyCoast app. A recording will be made available on the MRC website.
- The Cornet Bay subcommittee is working with NWSF and Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group to plan vegetation planting and maintenance at the Cornet Bay restoration area for this year.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor reported the following:

- The MRC was asked by our County and Port Commissioners to advise on the SEPA review for the Navy's proposal to expand special operations training (in-water and on-land) in 28 State Parks, with training events more concentrated in Region 1, which includes Jefferson County. The MRC held an additional Special Meeting in January to discuss potential impacts to marine and nearshore resources and submitted a letter to our Commissioners.
- The MRC is continuing discussions on project planning for the 2021-2023 RFP.
- Jeff Taylor reported that Jefferson MRC is working with a robotics team for possible collaboration on derelict gear removal.

San Juan – Christina Koons reported the following:

- Through the Plastic Free Salish Sea campaigns, community members will be able to adopt a beach in the County soon.
- The MRC is organizing a symposium to share the recent research results of studies into the acoustic impacts of Navy jet aircraft.
- Christina Koons provided an update on San Juan MRC's continued work on the Be Whale Wise and Plastic Free Salish Sea campaigns. Commissioners discussed learning more about Plastic Free Salish Sea and how the campaign has been affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

Skagit – Paul Dinnel reported the following:

- Salish Sea Stewards Classes begin February 23 – June 1. The curriculum is close to being finalized. Deadline to register is February 16.
- The Kids on the Beach program is all ready to go virtual this spring! Four different schools have signed up to participate.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis reported the following:



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- Susan Tarpley and Bob Hillmann have both completed nine years on the MRC and are terming out as members of the MRC. Sarah Brown has chosen not to renew her next term on the MRC and is leaving the MRC after six years of service. Tim Ellis will serve as representative to NWSC.
- The new interpretive signage for Howarth Park has been installed.
- The MRC has nominated three new members and are currently waiting formal appointment by the Snohomish County Council (expected in February 2021).
- The County has secured all \$15 million funds needed for the Meadowdale Restoration Project and is expected to go to bid within the month.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile reported the following:

- It is anticipated that four new members will be appointed to the MRC by the Whatcom County Council on January 26. Elizabeth Kilanowski, Pete Granger, and Ryan McLaughlin have all departed the MRC.

Open Discussion Breakout Groups

Meeting attendees met in small groups and discussed aspects of the Commission meeting they felt were most important for MRC representatives to bring back to their MRCs.

Meeting Recap

Commissioners reported what aspects of the Commission meeting they felt were most important for MRC representatives to bring back to their MRCs. Find the meeting highlights document [here](#).

Public comment

There was no public comment.

* The next regular Commission meeting will be on **Friday, February 26**.*