



minutes

February 26, 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), Pete Haase (Skagit), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Christina Koons (San Juan), Tom Cowan, Chris Castner, Nan McKay, Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Jennifer Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership-Alt), Julia Parrish

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

Others in Attendance: Caroline Gibson (NW Straits Foundation), Austin Rose (Whatcom MRC), Diane Hennebert (Skagit MRC), Tom Wooten (Chairman, Samish Indian Nation), Todd Woodard (Samish Indian Nation), Alex Gradwohl (Washington Trust for Historic Preservation), Alisa Taylor (Clallam MRC), Sarah Fisker (Jefferson MRC)

Absent: Laura Blackmore

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

Approval of Minutes

The Commission approved the minutes from the January Northwest Straits Commission by consensus.

Welcome from Tom Wooten

Samish Indian Nation Chairman Tom Wooten thanked the NW Straits Commission for the continued focus on marine conservation and community science. He sang a traditional Samish song to help open the meeting.

Maritime National Heritage Area

Alex Gradwohl presented on the creation of a Maritime National Heritage Area in Washington. Their aim is to use a locally based approach to identify needs and to maintain cultural resources along 3,000 miles of shoreline. Marine heritage resources will be broadly defined including docks, fisheries, and salmon. Opportunities for MRCs to be involved include [taking a survey](#), participating in regional workshops, and commenting on the draft management plan.

NW Straits Commission Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Elsa reported that Julia Parrish joined the Executive Committee. The committee is focusing on the graphics aspect of the communications plan to make the connections between the Commission, Foundation and MRCs more clear. The Commission Executive Committee held a joint meeting with the Foundation Executive Committee. They discussed how to move forward with the Northwest Straits



Initiative retreat and conference in the world of COVID and how to pursue joint communications on kelp.

Directors Report

Lucas reported that Katie Harris accepted a new job. Her last day was February 19. The Commission will be filling her position in the next few months. The Commission is working on securing funding for green crab and kelp projects and will be recruiting an intern through Veteran's Conservation Corps for project support. Allie and Dana are drafting a proposal to US Fish and Wildlife Service to support eelgrass voluntary no-anchor zone expansion.

External Relations Committee

Tom Cowan reported that the full \$910,000 of state funding to MRCs has been included in the governor's budget. Final status of this funding should be known late March.

Science Advisory Committee

Julia reported that the committee is examining the Northwest Straits Commission Request for Proposals and how it's tied to the initiative strategic plan. She presented the idea of "fail fast, fail forward". This idea is a catalyst for a cultural change within the Initiative to talk more about lessons learned and how failing is viewed as a positive aspect. The Committee is also evaluating new ways of connecting MRC work to regional impacts.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) update

Cecilia reported that she is working with Lucas and Allie to create a tribal acknowledgement for NW Straits Commission. She is working with Lucas and Dana to present the Eelgrass Voluntary No-Anchor Zone project at the Environmental Policy Project meeting as tribes are concerned about the recreational impacts on usual and accustomed tribal areas. They are keeping close tabs on the Net Ecological Gain Bill ([HB 1117](#)) in order to assure mitigation and key language regarding climate are appropriately represented. Also keeping updated on bills surrounding riparian areas and pinnipeds.

Puget Sound Partnership Update

Jenn Grimm reported that 2021 virtual Puget Sound Day on the Hill will be held every Friday starting April 23 to May 21. The [PUGET SOS](#) bill was reintroduced in Congress. The leadership council approved the desired outcomes for the action agenda update. The next step is to identify strategies to achieve the outcomes.

Northwest Straits Foundation Update

Caroline reported that Pew awarded an eelgrass project grant to San Juan County. The new Marine Conservation Fellow has started and is already working with Jason out in the field. The Seahorse Siesta restoration project is completed. Over 200 people participated in the virtual Shore Friendly workshop. The Foundation received the Paycheck Protection Program loan they had applied for.



minutes

MRC Reports

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- Kristin Murray, their vice chair, had to resign to pursue a new career opportunity. The MRC is looking for a new vice chair.
- They are currently holding retreat sessions to plan for upcoming projects. Some projects they are looking into are Olympia oyster restoration and creating a rain garden in Blaine.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- New members recently joined: Brienne Townsend, Andrew Gobin and Michael Kundu.
- They are looking to establish the Plastic Free Salish Sea project, following San Juan MRCs lead.
- The MRC co-hosted a Virtual Beach Walk Event February 22 with Snohomish County Beach Watchers and the Snohomish MRC, which was very well attended.

Skagit – Pete Haase

- The 2021 Salish Sea Stewards program began with 41 people registered.
- The 2021 Fidalgo Bay Day event date is tentatively set for Saturday, August 28.
- A new infographic for WA Dept of Natural Resources Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve's 2020 forage fish data was created by Rondi Nordal, AmeriCorps with RE-Sources.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- They are hosting a [science symposium](#) with the Salish Sea Institute about Navy jet noise impacts.
- The [Adopt a Beach](#) database is due to be launched at the end of the month.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor reported the following:

- The MRC is continuing work on the robotics project to remove derelict gear.
- No-Anchor Zones subcommittee is moving forward with developing a dive manual and safety standards, to ensure our experienced volunteers can continue to dive and safely.

Island – Elsa reported the following:

- Three new members recently joined: Jill Lipoti, Ken Collins and Alex Plumb.
- They held a shoreline symposium with the NW Straits Foundation.
- They are involved in the Shoreline Master Program update with Barbara Bennett serving as liaison.

Clallam – Alan Clark reported the following:

- They held a kelp webinar with Tom Mumford, with over 50 people attending. The recording is available on [YouTube](#).
- They are working on creating a committee for oil spill preparedness.
- They are preparing to start the internship program for this year.



minutes

Round table

There was no round table for this meeting.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

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