



minutes

March 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, Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Nan McKay, Chris Castner, Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership-alternate), Julia Parrish

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

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger (Northwest Straits Foundation), Austin Rose (Whatcom MRC), Alisa Taylor (Clallam MRC), Anna Toledo (Island MRC), Frances Robertson (San Juan MRC), Caroline Gibson (NW Straits Foundation)

Absent: Laura Blackmore

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

Approval of Minutes

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

Welcome from Melanie Bacon

Island County Commissioner Melanie Bacon provided a welcome to the group. Commissioner Bacon serves District 1, from just south of Oak Harbor to the south end of Whidbey Island, and previously served as Director of Human Resources for the County. She ran for County Commissioner to help be a caretaker for Island County, and recognized the work of the Northwest Straits Commission as caretakers. She encouraged the Commission to continue our important projects, and expressed gratitude to the Commission for providing resources to the counties. Commissioner Bacon thanked the tribal representatives who participate, as well as the governor appointees, along with a personal thanks to the local MRC members and staff member Anna Toledo.

NW Straits Commission Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Elsa Schwartz provided a summary from the March meeting and brought forward a recommendation that the Joint Executive Committee group transition to serve as a Leadership Team. The group would be made up of the Foundation and Commission executive committees and their directors. The Commission approved the change as proposed by consensus.

External Relations Committee

Committee chair Tom Cowan noted that there was no meeting, and that they had expected to see the state budget by now. He noted that there is no indication that the funding for MRCs won't be in the budget, but there is no new information at this time. Lucas shared an update on the kelp priorities



minutes

funding request initiated by Senator Rolfes. This funding, if approved, will help keep priorities moving forward and includes some funding for the regional kelp monitoring effort.

Science Advisory Committee

Committee chair Julia Parrish reported that they held a meeting on March 10 and described two major themes the committee focused on. One is the committee's role in the annual MRC funding cycle and the NW Straits Commission's Request for Proposal process. She noted that the committee sees itself as facilitating the current work, and providing additional "glue" to link NW Straits Commission/MRCs to science centers.

The second area of focus was looking at Actions to Impacts and how to make both regional and local impacts. As a description, she explained that Actions to Impacts just says that anything we do should have a measurable and positive impact on the system (ecosystem or social system). Impacts can be measured at the scale of an individual project, or linked to multiple projects. Julia noted that she is a fan of moving toward a "lessons learned" point of view (fail forward), where learning from the work is an important impact that can drive how work is carried out in the future by one or more MRCs.

Tribal Acknowledgement

Allie Simpson shared background information about the purpose and process for creating a tribal acknowledgement, and read the current draft. The acknowledgement is anticipated to be shared as a verbal acknowledgement at meetings, including Commission meetings and other events where MRCs are participating, as well as included on our website. Cecilia Gobin noted that we should defer to a particular tribe when they are present, such as the Samish welcome at the February meeting. Cecilia plans to share it with the NW Indian Fisheries Commission in April as part of her update on NW Straits Commission activities. The acknowledgement will likely be ready for Commission approval at the April meeting.

Discussion followed, and Commissioners recommended providing clear information about its use and purpose when it is shared, in order to ensure it is used for its intended purpose and provides information to others. They also suggested that a written report about how the acknowledgement was created might be useful to others who want to follow suit.

Business items

Lucas provided an update on the Veterans Conservation Corps internship position. Commission staff held interviews yesterday and are planning for two interns, one will join in April and the other in June.

Lucas also updated the Commission on the hiring process for the Communications & Outreach Specialist position. Commission staff will share the posting for that position when available.

Dana shared a link to the Survive the Sound virtual migration game and invited anyone interested to join the Northwest Straits Initiative team: <https://www.survivethesound.org/>



minutes

Sasha provided an updated 2021 calendar, noting that the 2021 conference will be held virtually on October 29, with plans for an in-person event in 2022. Sasha will reach out to MRCs to schedule presentations from MRCs to the Commission for the May/June meetings. MRC staff will receive guidance for those presentations before the April Commission meeting.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) update

Cecilia reported that she has been working with NW Straits Commission staff on the tribal acknowledgement, and facilitated having Lucas and Dana present to the NW Indian Fisheries Commission's Environmental Policy Committee on eelgrass voluntary no anchor zones this month. Cecilia also noted that the NWIFC sent a letter to Governor Inslee to request a special task force to develop solutions to address recreational impacts to tribal treaty rights. By request, she provided a copy of the letter to share with the NW Straits Commission members.

Puget Sound Partnership Update

Jenn Grimm reported that the Partnership is beginning the process for the 2022-26 [Action Agenda update](#). They are also watching for the 2021-23 state budget, and tracking the status of the [PUGET SOS Act](#). Nan asked about funding and Jenn reported that the PUGET SOS bill authorizes for up to \$50M/year for five years, which would need to be appropriated separately by Congress.

Northwest Straits Foundation Update

Don Hunger provided an update on the Foundation, noting that with the state in phase three of the recovery plan, the Foundation can get back to collaborating with MRC volunteers. Construction on the Seahorse Siesta restoration project is complete, which restored 12,000 square feet of forage fish habitat and restored shoreline processes. The Foundation is preparing to launch a new outreach and engagement campaign called the Passport for Adventure.

MRC Reports

MRCs provided full written reports that are available in the [pre-meeting materials](#). Highlights are included below:

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- The MRC recommended the appointment of Kathy Ketteridge to fill the Citizen-at-Large vacancy. The County Council will officially approve Kathy's appointment on March 23.
- The MRC held their virtual retreat on February 25 and March 4. The committee refined their annual process and timeline for prioritizing and selecting projects. After generating and reviewing a comprehensive list of current proposed projects, the MRC agreed to a final list of projects to include in the 2021-2023 grant proposal.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The MRC Outreach Subcommittee is planning for an Earth Day cleanup of Snohomish County shorelines related to the "Plastic Free Salish Sea" campaign. This event will include an



minutes

opportunity for participants to drop off their trash to be “sorted” and weighed so that the MRC can better understand how trash is impacting local waterways.

- Five one-pagers have been completed on the MRC’s priority areas for creosote piling removal in the Snohomish estuary. The MRC will be hosting stakeholder meetings this spring to discuss opportunities for future removal.
- The MRC is preparing their scope of work for 2021-2022 MRC grant, which will focus on updating information from the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area plan. This work is in partnership with Island County MRC.

Skagit – Pete Haase

- Skagit MRC and the Skagit Board of County Commissioners submitted letters of support for continued state funding of the European green crab monitoring, trapping and removal effort.
- We are working on finalizing our grant proposals for the 2021-2023 MRC Grant.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- The MRC co-hosted a successful science symposium on the subject of Navy jet noise with the Salish Sea Institute. Over 230 people attended from across 14 states, Canada and Mexico.
- Adopting a Beach in San Juan County is now available to all!

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- We had some membership changes in March: welcomed three new MRC members, two members resigned, and one member changed positions (see below).
- We began rain garden work with high school students in front of the Maritime Center this week.
- Every subcommittee is meeting, planning and prepping for the busy spring and summer seasons.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- Forage fish: Volunteer monitoring has been allowed to resume. Ann will be working with volunteers to get them trained in the iForms app for data collection.
- Restoration – Seahorse Siesta (partnership with NWSF): The barge and bulkhead have been removed at Seahorse Siesta! The NW Straits Foundation led a planting event with community members.
- Restoration/Advisory – Hoypus Point (partnership with NW Straits Foundation): Newly elected Commissioner Bacon will be visiting Hoypus Point on April 19 to learn about the restoration site and the work of the MRC.

Clallam – Alan Clark

- Summer Internships are being advertised and the hiring process is ready to begin. The internships are with the Tumwater Smolt Trap project, and Green Crab Removal Project with the Makah Tribe.
- The Committee has received 50 applications for the MRC Coordinator/Dungeness Floodplain Restoration Coordinator position.



minutes

- The Clallam MRC Kelp Webinar was successful, with good turnout and positive audience feedback. The next webinar is in the process of being planned, and will focus more on the current status of local/regional kelp beds, environmental threats to kelp, and actions which can be taken by locals to help improve and maintain nearshore ecosystem health.

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission generated a list of key highlights that staff will compile to send to MRC representatives to share with their MRCs. Highlights included:

- NWS Commission Tribal acknowledgement. A draft is included in pre-meeting materials that is still undergoing edits.
- Recreation impacts to treaty rights letter from the NW Indian Fisheries Commission.
- In place of the 2021 conference a virtual event will be held October 29
- Actions to Impacts and the importance of learning from “failure” as an important discussion for the MRCs
- May/June MRC presentations to the Commission
- Foundation is creating a “Passport for Marine Adventure” game to get the public outdoors and educate them on the NW Straits Initiative.
- [Adopt a Beach](#) – Plastic Free Salish Sea link
- Reminder for [Northwest Straits 101](#) on April 15, recommended for new MRC members
- MRCs should consider developing relationships with local reporters to keep them updated on MRC work.

Round table

Pete Haase mentioned that the Salish Sea Stewards heard about kelp from Max Calloway in one of their recent training sessions.

Tom Cowan noted the importance of the work behind the scenes on the budget, and recognized Lucas for all of his work in the background.

Christina Koons asked about the lack of NOAA involvement in the Commission and NW Straits Initiative. Tom shared some insights from the original formation.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

* The next regular Commission meeting will be on [Friday, April 30](#).*