



Minutes

April 30, 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), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Christina Koons (San Juan), Nan McKay, Chris Castner, Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership-alternate)

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

Others in Attendance: Jay Lind (Skagit MRC), Austin Rose (Whatcom MRC), Frances Robertson (San Juan MRC)

Absent: Laura Blackmore, Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Pete Haase (Skagit), Tom Cowan, Julia Parrish

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

Approval of Minutes

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

Director's Report

Budget update – Lucas reported that efforts to secure state funding for MRCs, kelp and green crab were successful for the state 2021-23 biennium. Commission staff is also focused on two pending awards from Pew Charitable Trusts and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Staffing update – Lucas noted that one currently open Commission staff position is closing May 3, and a second field support (green crab) opening will be posted by the Department of Ecology soon.

Tribal acknowledgement – Lucas reported that we're waiting to bring the draft tribal acknowledgement back to the full Commission until another tribe has an opportunity to review it.

NW Straits Commission Committee Reports

Executive Committee – Elsa noted that some of the updates in the director's report were on the Executive Committee agenda, and noted that they are hoping to be able to schedule an in-person retreat in the fall.

Science Advisory Committee – Dana provided an update, noting that the committee is meeting monthly. Current tasks include reviewing the role of the Committee, including how to provide support for MRC project development, and how the committee will provide input on MRC Requests for Proposals to help elevate science across the initiative, embrace failure, and share lessons learned.

External Relations Committee – Lucas shared information about committee members' activity related to reauthorization of the Northwest Straits Initiative.



Minutes

Business items

European green crab trapping and removal – Allie updated the Commission on current activities, including removal operations in Drayton Harbor. The timing is about two months earlier than last year, which will help get a better idea of the seasonality and how the green crabs move. Allie also shared information about how they determine how significant the crab infestation is, through the Catch Per Unit Effort, and other details about the problem of green crab in the Salish Sea.

Pew Charitable Trusts kelp funding – Commission staff and partners are starting a year-long project to lead two workshops and improve kelp protections through existing rules and policies.

US Fish and Wildlife Service – Dana described a project proposal for expansion of the voluntary no-anchor eelgrass protection zones. US Fish and Wildlife Service has agreed to fund a piece of this project. We are seeking additional funding sources. The project will be carried out in partnership with MRCs and the NW Straits Foundation, and will start with the sites that are most ready.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) update

There was no update this meeting.

Puget Sound Partnership Update

Jenn Grimm reported that the Puget Sound Days on the Hill are off to a good start, and she encouraged Northwest Straits Commission members to join future events. Per request by members of the Commission, Jenn will share a summary document outlining the state funding outcomes related to Puget Sound from the 2021 legislative session.

Northwest Straits Foundation Update

NW Straits Foundation staff did not attend, but Lucas passed on a message that they are working on their FY22 budget. Dana added that the Foundation has secured a small grant to create safety training videos for kelp kayak volunteers.

Election of Officers

Nan McKay thanked Alan for his role as chair for the last two years, noting that he is very engaged in many aspects of the NW Straits Commission's work. Nan nominated Elsa Schwartz to serve as chair for 2021-22, and nominated Tom Cowan to serve as vice chair. Tom was not in attendance but Nan explained that he is willing to serve as vice chair, but does not plan to serve as chair.

The Commission moved and approved by consensus the election of Elsa Schwartz as chair and Tom Cowan as vice chair.



Minutes

MRC Reports

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

Clallam – Alan Clark

- The MRC selected an intern to work on the European Green Crab project. The internship is based in Neah Bay and is conducted in partnership with the Makah Tribe.
- Kelp Webinar II— Planning continues for a second kelp webinar.
- Video outreach to local college students has been effective in raising interest in internships.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- **Restoration – Tire Cleanup by Seahorse Siesta:** The MRC worked with the Seahorse Siesta community to organize a cleanup of 70 tires and other marine debris along the shoreline west of the Seahorse Siesta restoration site.
- **Restoration – Hoypus Point (partnership with NWSF):** County Commissioner Melanie Bacon visited Hoypus Point with Anna Toledo, Gwendolyn Hannam, and Lori Clark to learn about the restoration project.
- **Interest in Microplastics:** The MRC is interested in learning more about microplastics and ways we might be able to engage, particularly in understanding what questions we should be asking/answering, what work is already underway, and areas where the MRC could fit in. We welcome any suggestions for organizations or individuals to contact!

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- Olympia oysters team spread 80 cultch bags (2 cubic yards) of Pacific oyster shell at the Discovery Bay Lagoon site on April 16th with the help of 12 MRC members, staff and community volunteers – see photos below.
- Rain gardens work continues with students at Quilcene School (a second installation here) and in front of the Maritime Center in Port Townsend (a rehabilitation effort).

San Juan – Christina Koons

- MRC members and Plastic Free Salish Sea beach stewards participated in the Spring Great Islands Clean-up.
- April saw a focus on reporting, grant amendments and grant preparation.

Skagit – Jay Lind

- Lots of pinto abalone were recently discovered at two abalone restoration sites in Skagit County waters that were previously thought to have low survival rates.
- Fidalgo Bay Day is canceled this year. The Committee is considering other alternatives.



Minutes

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The MRC hosted an Earth Day cleanup of Snohomish County shorelines in partnership with the “Plastic Free Salish Sea” campaign and WSU Snohomish County. 554 pounds of trash were picked up and dropped off to be sorted by volunteers. This was a great inaugural event and we hope to do it again!
- MRC staff Elisa Dawson hosted a stakeholder meeting with DNR, Department of Ecology, Snohomish County, Tulalip Tribal Police, Snohomish County Sheriff, Everett Police Department, City of Marysville, and the Port of Everett on derelict vessels. The group discussed the scope of work for 2021 removals and continued collaborative efforts to address the backlog of derelict vessels in the Snohomish estuary.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- Kathy Ketteridge was appointed to the MRC on March 23 to fill a Citizen-at-Large position. She was welcomed by the MRC at the April meeting.
- The MRC provided comment to the Whatcom County SMP amendments supporting the inclusion of the Marine Resource Lands policy section, as developed by the MRC.

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 are compiled on a separate document and sent directly to MRC staff and representatives. Highlights included:

- Budget update – Efforts to secure state and other funding sources (described above).
- Elections – Elsa Schwartz, Island MRC representative was elected chair. Tom Cowan was elected to serve as vice chair. Thank you to Alan Clark of the Clallam MRC for his two terms as chair.
- Staffing needs – Commission upcoming position opening.
- Green crab – Update and status (described above).
- Salish Sea Stewards – Skagit MRC had great success with their virtual training this year, with 39 people completing the program.
- Kelp – Next steps include a project to explore ways to improve kelp protections through existing rules and policies.
- Microplastics – Island MRC is interested in work around microplastics. Next steps include coordinating with other interested MRCs on this topic and investigating partner projects in microplastics such as COASST, NOAA or others, with linkage to PFSS.
- [Northwest Straits Foundation’s Passport to Adventure](#)

Round table

Lucas suggested a future presentation to the Commission by COASST.

Nan McKay recommended a recent Seattle Times [article](#) from Lynda Mapes.



Minutes

Lucas mentioned that he had recently helped on a post-restoration seining at a site in Jefferson, sharing as a local success story.

Tim Ellis requested and received a [Passport to Adventure](#) from the NW Straits Foundation and he is excited about it, but noted the ferry to Jetty Island (one of the sites featured) is not running due to COVID safety concerns.

Jeff Taylor started to create a new video series on climate change, with his first interviews next week.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

* The next regular Commission meeting will be on Friday, May 28 via Zoom.*