



Minutes

July 30, 2021 • 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Zoom – Conference call
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Chris Castner, Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Alan Clark (Clallam), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Pete Haase (Skagit), Christina Koons (San Juan), Julia Parrish, Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Nan McKay

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Dana Oster, Allie Simpson, Jonathan Hallenback, Leslie Perkins

Others in Attendance: Ginny Broadhurst (Salish Sea Institute), Don Hunger (Northwest Straits Foundation), Rebecca Paradis (Clallam MRC), Tim Cochnauer (Clallam MRC), Sarah Fiskén (Jefferson-alternate)

Absent: Laura Blackmore, Cecilia Gobin (Tribal)

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment. The Commission allowed some time for people to share their remembrances of Caroline Gibson's positive impact on people she met and her work protecting the environment. The Northwest Straits Foundation has established a marine conservation scholarship in her name.

Approval of Minutes

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

State of the Salish Sea

Ginny Broadhurst, Director of the Salish Sea Institute at Western Washington University presented the State of the Salish Sea report to the Commission. The State of the Salish Sea report synthesizes data on climate and human development stressors to the Salish Sea, waters shared by Coast Salish Tribes and First Nations, Canada, and the United States. This report is the first holistic scientific assessment since the Shared Waters Report in 1994. It focuses on ecosystem maps and scientific data, and is not restricted to political boundaries. Following the presentation, the Commission members discussed collaborative work among governments, promoting the report, and engaging in policy actions for identified strategies. The report is available at [Salish Sea Institute \(www.edu\)](http://www.salishseainstitute.edu).

Clallam MRC Presentation on Tumwater Creek intern project

Tim Cochnauer, chair of the Clallam MRC, along with Rebecca Paradis, Clallam MRC staff, presented information on the MRC's internship program, specifically the intern project at Tumwater Creek, which flows 20+ miles from the Olympic Mountains to the Port Angeles harbor. The intern works in cooperation with the Lower Elwha Tribe to capture and identify fish in a smolt trap in Tumwater Creek. The interns track the number of each species, habitat use and creek conditions. Tim explained that the internships last approximately three months (up to 80 paid hours) and each has an assigned mentor. Interns also are involved in MRC beach seining and oyster surveys. Commission members discussed the value of hands-on work for students and expressed interest in maximizing opportunities across all MRCs.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee – Tom Cowan updated the Commission on retreat plans for a virtual session on September 23, 2021, 1:00pm-3:30pm and in-person session on September 24, 2021, 10:30am-3:30pm at Padilla Bay. Feedback is being collected through a questionnaire on possible retreat topics of interest. The Commission is also



Minutes

evaluating whether to return to in-person Commission meetings in December/January. The Commission approved the MRC funding policy by consensus.

External Relations Committee – Chris Castner updated the Commission on the efforts for federal reauthorization of the Northwest Straits Initiative and clarified the purpose is to create more stability for the Initiative, including funding. Senator Murray’s office will have conversations with stakeholders over the August recess.

Science Advisory Committee – Julia Parrish informed the Commission on the committee updating the Request for Proposal process to streamline and clearly link to Actions to Impacts. The committee is discussing science project presentations at Commission meetings that might be of interest to MRC’s for local action.

Business items

In addition to the written update, staff provided the following business items:

- **2021-23 MRC grants:** A summary table of 2021-23 MRC project proposals for Northwest Straits funding was included in the meeting packet. Sasha Horst thanked MRCs, their staff and project leads for developing the project proposals. She noted that not all MRCs included year two projects. Those will be added through an amendment process in early 2022. The included budget figures are not final, and Commission staff will work with MRCs to finalize project budgets in the next month. The Commission approved the project funding with flexibility to adjust the budgets by consensus.
- **Forage fish program:** Pete Haase along with Dana Oster updated the Commission that WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife will continue assessing forage fish samples for the 2021-2022 state fiscal year. There is a desire to increase awareness of the value of this joint effort with local volunteers. An ad hoc committee formed with Pete Haase, Alan Clark, Tim Ellis, Jeff Taylor, Christina Koons, and Dana Oster to discuss communication messaging potential.

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don Hunger reported the Foundation is exploring opportunities to organize a centralized internship program. The Foundation board is recruiting for open member seats and he welcomes recommendations for candidates.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) update

No report was provided.

Puget Sound Partnership Update

No report was provided.

MRC Updates

MRCs provided full written reports that are available in the pre-meeting materials. Highlights are included below:

Clallam – Alan Clark

- As noted above, Chair Tim Cochnauer, gave an informative presentation on the Tumwater project internship program. Members would like to see how a broader internship program could be centralized for MRC opportunities.
- Three interns have been hired and are working with mentoring oversight on Tumwater smolt trap, outreach cards, and European Green Crab monitoring.



Minutes

- MRC members met the Kelp Expedition participants at Freshwater Bay for kelp monitoring activities on the water on the opening day July 15.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- Volunteers are conducting surveys for the bull kelp monitoring season, recently adding the Hoypus Point site.
- Volunteers outreached on opening day of crabbing season with crabber materials and rot cord at Camano Island State Park, Cornet Bay Boat Launch, Langley Marina, and Oak Harbor Marina.
- Congratulations to MRC staff, Anna Toledo, who has given birth to baby boy Matias!

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor & Sarah Fisker

- Good visibility was reported during the underwater ROV testing on July 6. Detected lost crab pots could not be removed without obtaining proper permits.
- Volunteers installed a rain garden at the corner of Franklin and Adams Streets in Port Townsend on July 28.
- Members enjoyed the gathering and food at the Kelp Expedition event at Chetzemoka Park on July 17.
- Oyster monitoring at Discovery Bay resulted in better than expected results for mortality rates and recruitment success from last year's spread.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- Plastic Free Salish Sea initiative outreach is continuing through July.
- Volunteer Oates installed a Seabin floating aquatic filter at Deer Park Marina. This pilot project will be monitored by staff through the end of summer and will inform what plastics, foam and other debris are captured from the waterways.
- Congratulations to Dr. Frances Robertson on the birth of her new baby girl Ellery!

Skagit – Pete Haase

- Volunteers, the public, and Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group participated in the successful work party at Bowman Bay on July 19. Work included weeding, watering, forage fish spawning surveys, hosting the forage fish interpretive station, and beach seining at the restoration site.
- Survey work is being done (by Paul Dinnel collaborating with researchers from WA, OR, and B.C.) in Fidalgo Bay to assess the impacts of the recent heat wave event. Results so far indicate some loss of Olympia Oysters at each site. Work continued to collect seed oysters to move into south Padilla Bay.
- Pete noted the March Point Heronry and monitoring concerns about nesting counts.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- Outreach efforts in Everett reached about 1,000 crabbers over 3 days and referred to the pictures of volunteers at work provided in the report
- Area politicians and advocates toured the Meadowdale Beach Park and Estuary Restoration Project on July 9th. Included on site were U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell, State Senator Marko Liias, Edmonds Mayor Mike Nelson, and Snohomish County Councilmember Megan Dunn. Tim reported notable progress has been made on the project in the past month.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile



Minutes

- The Whatcom County Council unanimously voted on July 27, 2021, as the first jurisdiction in the US to ban new fossil fuel infrastructure. This includes no new refinery improvements at Cherry Point. Read more at: [Washington state county is first in the US to ban new fossil fuel infrastructure - Digital Journal](#).
- The MRC is advertising for the open Conservation-Environmental seat vacated by Rachel Arnold.
- The speaker series hosted 25 attendees at Dr. Jen McIntyre's (Washington State University) presentation on the impacts to salmon from car tire contaminants.

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

Members of the Commission generated a list of key highlights from the meeting to share with their MRCs, including:

- **State of the Salish Sea:** The State of the Salish Sea report is available for download access or print purchase at <https://wp.wvu.edu/salishsea/>.
- **2021-23 MRC grants:** The 2021-23 MRC projects proposals were approved by the Commission.
- **Forage fish sample processing update:** WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife will continue assessing samples for the 2021-2022 state fiscal year. There is a need to communicate the value of this joint effort. An ad hoc committee formed with Pete Haase, Alan Clark, Tim Ellis, Jeff Taylor, Christina Koons, and Dana Oster to discuss communication potential.
- **Internships:** There is interest in focusing on MRC internship program opportunities and discussing this as a topic at the upcoming retreat.
- The presentation on impacts to salmon from car tire contamination given by Dr. McIntyre to Whatcom's speaker series, was requested for the Commission's information. Staff will follow up.

Public comment

Pete Haase inquired about the list of included tribes in the recently adopted tribal acknowledgment, and why Upper Skagit and Sauk-Suiattle were not included in the list. Lucas Hart explained that the identification process was done in collaboration with Cecilia Gobin, who can provide additional insights.

*The next regular Commission meeting will be on Friday, August 27, 2021, via Zoom.