



# Minutes

May 28, 2021 • 10:00 AM-12:00 PM  
Zoom – Conference call  
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

## **Attendees:**

**Commission Members:** Alan Clark (Clallam), Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Nan McKay, Chris Castner, Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership-alternate), Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Julia Parrish, Cecilia Gobin (Tribal)

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

**Others in Attendance:** Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Frances Robertson (San Juan MRC), Elisa Dawson (Snohomish MRC), Alex Pittman (Snohomish MRC), Sara Maxwell (Snohomish MRC), Anna Toledo (Island MRC), Monica Montgomery (Jefferson MRC), Andrew Gobin (Snohomish MRC)

**Absent:** Laura Blackmore, Pete Haase (Skagit), Christina Koons (San Juan)

## **Welcome and Introductions**

Elsa opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

## **Approval of Minutes**

The Commission approved the [minutes](#) from the April Northwest Straits Commission as amended by consensus.

## **MRC Presentations**

Three MRCs each shared a project that will be included in their proposal to the Northwest Straits Commission. The remaining four will present at the June 25 meeting. The presentations can be viewed [here](#).

- Island MRC – Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area Report Card Update. Presented by Scott Chase. This project is a shared effort with Snohomish MRC. Island MRC will be focused on reviewing new science relevant to Conservation Action Plan Conservation Targets and Strategies.
- Snohomish MRC – Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area Report Card Update. Presented by Sara Maxwell. As noted above, this is a joint effort with Island MRC. Snohomish MRC will focus on stakeholder engagement and input on objectives and strategic actions.
- San Juan MRC – Eelgrass protection and derelict vessel prevention. Presented by Frances Robertson. The MRC's goal is to reduce the number of derelict vessels in the county and raise awareness of this long-running challenge. The MRC will also maintain voluntary anchor out protection zone at Odlin County Park and determine effectiveness by monitoring vessel compliance.



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## **Business items**

Staffing update – Lucas reported that interviewing is in progress for the Communications and Outreach Specialist position and we hope to have someone starting July 1. A second field technician position is anticipated to be posted soon.

Kelp update – Dana is working to form an advisory team for workshops as part of the scope of work for the Pew-funded project. The kelp monitoring season kickoff meeting was held in May, with over 50 participants attending, including many volunteers, new recruits, and project partners. Also for the meeting, Puget Sound Restoration Fund staff joined to talk about their [Kelp Highway](#) expedition this summer.

Green crab update – Allie reported that they continue to focus on trapping and removal of crabs in Drayton Harbor in Blaine. Trapping has been going on for just over a month, and they have caught 36 so far. She also noted that a recent article about green crab resulted in new shoreline property owners granting access for trapping. Commission staff will also be working with Sea Grant and WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife on a grid survey, which will systematically go over the entire area in Drayton Harbor.

## **Committee Reports**

**Executive Committee** – There was no meeting of the Executive Committee this month.

**External Relations Committee** – Tom reported that the committee is focused exclusively on reauthorization of the Northwest Straits Initiative and is now meeting weekly. Tom thanked the MRCs and other organizations for providing letters of support.

**Science Advisory Committee** – Julia noted that the committee is deep in planning how they can best assist MRCs in achieving their project goals, and thinking about the MRC conference.

## **Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) update**

Cecilia noted that recent efforts focused on securing a letter from the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission in support of the Northwest Straits Initiative reauthorization. She also noted that she connected with Dana on the eelgrass and kelp projects, making sure that there are tribal connections and engagement in those.

## **Puget Sound Partnership Update**

Jenn Grimm reported that there is now an opportunity to provide input on the draft strategies for the [Action Agenda](#), and that the Puget Sound Partnership is finalizing the workplan for their next agreement with US EPA, which will begin in the fall.

Jenn also followed up on a question from the April Commission meeting, noting that the Partnership received state funding in the 2021-23 biennium for: environmental justice and an equity task force; funding to support and maintain Puget Sound Info; some funding for kelp conservation; and one-time funding for the [Quiet Sound](#) program.



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## **Northwest Straits Foundation Update**

From the written updates in the [pre-meeting materials](#), Don Hunger highlighted a few items, including a link to the Foundation's new [Shore Friendly video](#), the promotion of the Catch more Crab campaign on Washington State ferries, the Foundation's [Passport to Marine Adventure](#), and their [2020 highlights](#).

## **MRC Updates**

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

### **Clallam – Alan Clark**

- The newly hired MRC Coordinator, Rebecca Paradis, will begin working on June 1.
- 2021 Interns have been selected for the three positions. Vita Olson will work on the Tumwater smolt trap project; McKenzie Ginther will work on the education/outreach project, and a third intern will work on the green crab removal project.
- Elected Tim Cochnauer as chair, and Alan Clark will serve as vice-chair.
- Pigeon guillemot surveys will begin June 1.

### **Island – Elsa Schwartz**

- **Eelgrass Story Map:** The MRC has published a [Story Map](#) on the eelgrass monitoring project! This Story Map covers what eelgrass is and its role in our ecosystem, the research of community science volunteers, the IC MRC, and ways that viewers can help protect this critical habitat.
- **Forage fish presentation:** Ann and Anna provided a presentation on the forage fish monitoring program to the 2021 class of 47 Sound Water Stewards. The participants were engaged and interested in the project and asked great questions.
- **Departing member:** Randy Berthold is stepping down from the MRC to tend to other life obligations. Randy has served on the MRC since 2019, and during that time has assisted with the bull kelp monitoring project, outreach work, and has served on the Executive Committee. He has always provided a calm, steady voice on the committee, helping us stay focused and grounded in scientific rigor. We thank Randy for his service and contributions to the MRC!!

### **Jefferson – Jeff Taylor**

- Rain garden work completed (or near completion) at Chetzemoka Park (maintenance), Maritime Center (rehabilitation), and Quilcene School (new installation). A Maritime Center partner will be presenting about this collaboration at the next MRC monthly meeting.
- The No-Anchor Zones team will be swapping out the Port Townsend floats with buoys on May 23.

### **San Juan – Frances Robertson**

- San Juan County held an official opening for the Orcas Landing Marine Interpretive Outlook, the MRC was instrumental in the process and production of interpretive material.



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- The County and MRC hosted stakeholder engagement sessions regarding efforts to identify protection efforts for Southern Resident killer whales off the westside of San Juan Island.

### **Skagit** – Diane Hennebert

- 39 new volunteers are expected to complete the Salish Sea Stewards training program on June 1.
- 196 students from three different schools, 6th- 8th grades, participated in the hybrid Kids on the Beach Program this spring.
- Skagit MRC member Paul Dinnel, is working with Padilla Bay NERR research staff to expand native oyster restoration to the channels in the southern end of Padilla Bay.

### **Snohomish** – Tim Ellis

- The MRC is finalizing their MRC Grant for 2021-2022. The project work focuses on working with Island County MRC to update the Port Susan Report Card.
- Snohomish County plans to remove three derelict vessels in 2021 for an approximate cost of \$90,000. Posting the vessels will happen this summer, with targeting removal by a contractor in early September. This work will be reimbursed 90% by DNR.
- Mike Sadler has resigned from the MRC because he has been accepted into a Ph.D program at the University of Washington.

### **Whatcom** – Bob Cecile

- The MRC will soon have a vacancy for a Conservation-Environmental seat as Rachel Arnold will be resigning due to new employment out of state.
- It is anticipated that the MRC will provide input on the development of Whatcom County Climate Action Plan, which is currently being drafted by the Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee. In addition, the MRC will be providing a letter to the City of Bellingham concerning proposed development near the North Chuckanut Bay tidelands.
- Eleanor Hines and MRC Staff (Austin) were interviewed by Annika Fain on her podcast NWFish Passage. The interview is [now LIVE](#) on Spotify and Apple podcasts.

### **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:

- State of the Salish Sea report
- New video from the Foundation
- Port Susan presentations – provide access to all the presentations.

### **Round table**

Don mentioned that the Northwest Straits Foundation will be starting their board recruitment process and encouraged people to forward any suggestions for people to join the board.



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**Public comment**

There was no public comment.

\* The next regular Commission meeting will be on Friday, June 25 via Zoom.\*