



minutes

January 29, 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), Paul Dinnel (Skagit-Alt), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Christina Koons (San Juan), Tom Cowan, Julia Parrish, Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership- Alt)

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

Others in Attendance: Caroline Gibson (NW Straits Foundation), Heidi Eisenhour (Jefferson County Board of Commissioners), Alisa Taylor (Clallam MRC), Monica Montgomery (Jefferson MRC), Cathy Lear (Clallam MRC)

Absent: Nan McKay, Chris Castner, Cecilia Gobin (Tribal)

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

Approval of Minutes

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

Welcome from Heidi Eisenhour

Jefferson County Commissioner Heidi Eisenhour thanked the NW Straits Commission for the continued focus on marine conservation and community science. Heidi was elected to the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners in November 2020 and has been appointed to committees focused on recreation, solid waste, and natural resources, in addition to being appointed to the Jefferson MRC.

Director's Report

- Lucas Hart introduced two new Commissioners: Julia Parrish, gubernatorial appointee and Tim Ellis, representative from Snohomish MRC.
- Lucas reported that MRC Request for Proposals for the 2021-2023 project period will be issued in mid-March.
- Commission staff is working with Cecilia Gobin on a tribal acknowledgement for the Northwest Straits Commission.

Business Items

Communications Plan

Katie Harris provided an update on the Northwest Straits Communication Plan. She explained the communications processes that the Commission is doing well, areas for improvement, and new procedural elements, including the Initiative elevator pitch and key messages, and a diagram explaining the relationships between the Commission, Foundation, and MRCs. Commission staff will hold the NW Straits



minutes

Initiative 101 presentation on a semi-annual to quarterly basis to help new members of the Initiative gain a better understanding of NW Straits Initiative history, structure, and goals.

Kelp Season Recap

Dana Oster provided a summary of the 2020 bull kelp monitoring data. Dana provided a recap of the 2020 MRC Kelp Review held on January 21, which was attended by more than 50 MRC members, lead staff, and project volunteers. Dana offered to present the kelp monitoring data to individual MRCs.

NW Straits Commission Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Elsa reported that the committee is recommending postponing or rescheduling the annual NW Straits Initiative Retreat. The Committee will meet with the Foundation's Executive Committee on February 24 for a joint session.

External Relations

Tom Cowan reported that the Commission's state funding was included in the Governor's budget for the 2021-2023 biennium.

Science Advisory Committee

Dana reported that the committee has integrated the Commission's feedback from the December meeting into the Actions to Impacts graphic. Julia Parrish is the new chair of the committee. Kathy Wolf will serve on the Committee for the next six months. Tessa Francis is rejoining the committee.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) update

No update was provided.

Puget Sound Partnership Update

Jenn Grimm reported that Puget Sound Day on the Hill will be virtual in 2021. The events will begin in April. The Leadership Council is seeking nominations to the Puget Sound Partnership's Science Panel. Nominations are due by March 31, 2021. More information can be found [here](#).

Northwest Straits Foundation Update

Caroline Gibson reported that the Northwest Straits Foundation held a workshop titled "Working Together for the Salish Sea" on January 21. The workshop was with MRC lead staff members and MRC Chairs and addressed how the Foundation functions and what support they can provide to MRCs.

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark reported the following:

- The members approved the 2020-21 MRC workplan.



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- Clallam MRC will be working with Tom Mumford on a Kelp 101 webinar on February 24.
- The climate change subcommittee plans to meet with Dept. of Community Development Director Winborn, Karen Affeld at North Olympic Development Council, and Rich Meier at Clallam County.

Island – Elsa Schwartz reported the following:

- The full report on the 2020 bull kelp monitoring season is available on the MRC website.
- The MRC partnered with Sound Water Stewards to host a training on the MyCoast app. A recording will be made available on the MRC website.
- The Cornet Bay subcommittee is working with NWSF and Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group to plan vegetation planting and maintenance at the Cornet Bay restoration area for this year.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor reported the following:

- The MRC was asked by our County and Port Commissioners to advise on the SEPA review for the Navy's proposal to expand special operations training (in-water and on-land) in 28 State Parks, with training events more concentrated in Region 1, which includes Jefferson County. The MRC held an additional Special Meeting in January to discuss potential impacts to marine and nearshore resources and submitted a letter to our Commissioners.
- The MRC is continuing discussions on project planning for the 2021-2023 RFP.
- Jeff Taylor reported that Jefferson MRC is working with a robotics team for possible collaboration on derelict gear removal.

San Juan – Christina Koons reported the following:

- Through the Plastic Free Salish Sea campaigns, community members will be able to adopt a beach in the County soon.
- The MRC is organizing a symposium to share the recent research results of studies into the acoustic impacts of Navy jet aircraft.
- Christina Koons provided an update on San Juan MRC's continued work on the Be Whale Wise and Plastic Free Salish Sea campaigns. Commissioners discussed learning more about Plastic Free Salish Sea and how the campaign has been affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

Skagit – Paul Dinnel reported the following:

- Salish Sea Stewards Classes begin February 23 – June 1. The curriculum is close to being finalized. Deadline to register is February 16.
- The Kids on the Beach program is all ready to go virtual this spring! Four different schools have signed up to participate.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis reported the following:



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- Susan Tarpley and Bob Hillmann have both completed nine years on the MRC and are terming out as members of the MRC. Sarah Brown has chosen not to renew her next term on the MRC and is leaving the MRC after six years of service. Tim Ellis will serve as representative to NWSC.
- The new interpretive signage for Howarth Park has been installed.
- The MRC has nominated three new members and are currently waiting formal appointment by the Snohomish County Council (expected in February 2021).
- The County has secured all \$15 million funds needed for the Meadowdale Restoration Project and is expected to go to bid within the month.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile reported the following:

- It is anticipated that four new members will be appointed to the MRC by the Whatcom County Council on January 26. Elizabeth Kilanowski, Pete Granger, and Ryan McLaughlin have all departed the MRC.

Open Discussion Breakout Groups

Meeting attendees met in small groups and discussed aspects of the Commission meeting they felt were most important for MRC representatives to bring back to their MRCs.

Meeting Recap

Commissioners reported what aspects of the Commission meeting they felt were most important for MRC representatives to bring back to their MRCs. Find the meeting highlights document [here](#).

Public comment

There was no public comment.

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



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 Fiskén (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.



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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.



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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**.*



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



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funding request initiated by Senator Rolfes. This funding, if approved, will help keep 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/>



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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



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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.



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- 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](#).*



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.



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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.



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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.



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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.



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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.*



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.



Minutes

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

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.



Minutes

Public comment

There was no public comment.

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



Minutes

June 25, 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), Pete Haase (Skagit), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Nan McKay, Chris Castner, Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Christina Koons (San Juan)

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

Others in Attendance: Mike McKay (Whatcom MRC), Monica Montgomery (Jefferson MRC), Gordon King (Jefferson MRC), Jude Apple (Padilla Bay NERR/Skagit MRC), Austin Rose (Whatcom MRC), Elisa Dawson (Snohomish MRC), Sarah Fisker (Jefferson MRC), Leslie Perkins, Annie England (Padilla Bay NERR), Sara Brostrom (Padilla Bay NERR), Whitney Stohr

Absent: Julia Parrish, Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Laura Blackmore

Welcome and Introductions

Elsa Schwartz, chair, opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

Approval of Minutes

The Commission approved the minutes from the May Northwest Straits Commission as amended by consensus.

Ecology SEA Program Introduction

Joenne McGerr, Program Manager for the Washington Department of Ecology's Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program (SEA) introduced herself and described the SEA program. They seek to improve service to all communities by providing technical expertise and regulatory oversight on wetlands, protection of water quality, eliminating or reducing floods and other hazards, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and housing the state Washington Conservation Corps program. A discussion followed with members of the Commission asking about climate resiliency, the most pressing Puget Sound impacts, Shoreline Master Program process and other topics of mutual interest.

MRC Presentations

Three MRCs shared a project that will be included in their proposal to the Northwest Straits Commission. The presentations can be viewed [here](#).

- Jefferson MRC – Monica Montgomery shared an update on the voluntary no-anchor zone project, focusing on an updated buoy design and liability coverage. Jeff Taylor shared information about a pilot effort to test whether ROVs could be used for derelict crab pot removal.



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- Skagit MRC - Jude Apple, Annie England, and Sara Brostrom presented the two programs that Padilla Bay Reserve carries out in partnership with the MRC, Kids on the Beach and the Salish Sea Stewards, focusing on how they adapted to the virtual world, and looking ahead to next year.
- Whatcom MRC – Mike McKay presented a pilot project that the MRC is proposing to use a beach seine with local students to engage students in understanding fish use of the intertidal area.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee – Tom Cowan thanked departing member Alan Clark for his participation on the Executive Committee, and welcomed Jeff Taylor and Chris Castner as new members. Chris now serves on the committee as the chair of the External Relations Committee, and Jeff Taylor joined a second MRC representative.

Tom brought forward the tribal acknowledgement and noted that it is now ready for adoption, with the intent of reading it at the beginning of each meeting. He also said that MRCs are welcome to use it. The Commission moved and approved by consensus to adopt the tribal acknowledgement as written.

The committee also brought forward a draft MRC Funding Policy, which staff sent out in the pre-meeting materials and discussed with MRC staff at a previous meeting. MRCs should review and discuss, and bring forward any questions. The expectation is that the Commission will revisit it to consider approval at the July meeting.

Tom also shared that the Committee recommends holding an October meeting, but that an in-person conference is not possible in 2021 for a variety of reasons.

External Relations Committee – Chris Castner reported on the ongoing process for Northwest Straits Initiative reauthorization, noting four recent developments:

- Senator Murray has agreed to lead sponsorship of a reauthorization bill in the Senate.
- The 2011 reauthorization bill is being marked up for reintroduction.
- Reps. Kilmer and Larsen are coordinating to determine how to handle reauthorization in the House.
- An earmark for Fiscal Year 22 would provide federal funding, if secured.

Chris encouraged MRCs to consider opportunities to engage with county commissioners/councils and other local officials, and asked MRCs to share with him any examples where that's happening.

Science Advisory Committee – Dana provided an update on behalf of the committee. She noted that the committee is preparing to review a few select MRC projects, and they are looking for ways to better support MRCs and project development.

Business items



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

- Staffing update – Lucas informed the group that a new Communications and Outreach Specialist, Leslie Perkins, begins July 1. A second Marine Project Technician and Veterans Conservation Corps member, Antonio Jones, started in June. Another position (Ecosystem Projects Assistant) is posted through Ecology and closes June 25.
- In-person meetings – Lucas shared information about Ecology’s emerging plans for reopening. The group noted that ferry schedules are challenging, especially this summer. Staff will consider ways to accommodate both in-person and virtual attendees where possible.
- Retreat planning – Lucas noted that a planning group is starting conversations about a hybrid in-person and virtual retreat for the fall. More information will be forthcoming.
- Pew kelp project – Dana shared an update on the plans for this project, noting that the recent first advisory group meeting had great engagement. Commission staff also had a meeting with staff from the Governor’s office to provide an update on kelp work.
- Shoreline Master Program (SMP) workgroup – Barbara Bennett from Island MRC initiated a new workgroup of interested MRC representatives to collectively discuss SMP update processes and shared interests.
- Green crab update – Allie updated the group on the recent activities on trapping and removal of invasive green crab, including ongoing efforts in Drayton Harbor and new discovery in Squalicum Harbor in Bellingham Bay.
- Forage fish update – Dana shared the news that WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will not be able to process forage fish samples collected by MRCs after July 16, with only limited sample support for sites where eggs have been found for the first time. WDFW staff is preparing a letter with more information, and Dana will share it with MRCs. Dana can also help coordinate with WDFW on site specific recommendations for how to proceed beyond mid-July.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) update

No report.

Puget Sound Partnership Update

No report.

MRC Updates

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

Clallam – Alan Clark

- Internships are all up and going.
- Pigeon Guillemot monitoring was started week of June 7th.
- Rebecca Paradis was hired as new Clallam MRC Coordinator.



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Island – Elsa Schwartz

- **Anna Toledo's Parental Leave:** Anna has gone on maternity leave, and Ann Prusha will be taking on several of her duties while she is away.
- **Cornet Bay Stewardship:** Gwendolyn Hannam and Ann Prusha are going to be watering and weeding bi-weekly throughout the summer months. Anna, Gwendolyn, and Ann visited this site to strategize a watering and maintenance plan for this summer.
- **Bull Kelp:** The monitoring season is starting. Volunteers will be receiving Island County's HR training.
- **Microplastics:** Lyda Harris, Microplastics Fellow at the Seattle Aquarium gave a presentation about their microplastics program and potential ways that Island MRC can be involved. Jill Lipoti has been researching microplastics, and will be presenting at the July MRC meeting.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC gave its annual update presentation to the Board of County Commissioners on June 14.
- The MRC sent its dive safety manual to the County attorney in late May for review and recommendation for Board of County Commissioner's adoption.
- Northwest Straits Foundation Shore Friendly conducted 12 site visits with shoreline landowners in Jefferson County in May. We have three additional sites/stretchches of shoreline anticipating site visits and will continue promoting them throughout the summer.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- The MRC hosted Killer Whale Tales in the Friday Harbor and Orcas Island Elementary Schools to kick off Orca Action month.
- Eelgrass habitat protection zone vessel presence and compliance monitoring began.

Skagit – Pete Haase

- MRC Presentation to the Board of County Commissioners: The MRC Coordinator, Tracy Alker, presented to the Board of County Commissioners on June 8. She gave a brief history of the NWSI, an overview of the MRC, 2020 project highlights, and projects that are in the works. The presentation was well received.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration in Padilla Bay: MRC Project Lead, Paul Dinnel, is working with Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve to restore native oysters in the southern channels of Padilla Bay. Approximately 200 bags of oyster shell were purchased. 50 of those bags will be placed in Fidalgo Bay to collect oyster seed to outplant in Padilla Bay next spring.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The MRC submitted their NWSC Grant for 2021-2022 on June 8. This work will focus on reviewing the Port Susan MSA Plan and Report Card and is a collaboration with Island County.



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- Meadowdale Park has closed for construction on June 15, 2021. The project will remove shoreline armoring and restore a pocket estuary. The beach will be closed until Summer/Fall 2022.
- The MRC will host another clean up event on September 18, 2021 which is International Coastal Cleanup Day. This event will be in coordination with the WSU Beach Watchers, WSU Waste Warriors, and Zero Waste Washington, and will utilize the Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol developed by the EPA.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- The MRC has a vacancy for a Conservation-Environmental seat. This vacancy is advertised on the [MRC homepage](#).

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:

- No-anchor zone project from Jefferson, and especially lessons learned.
- Tribal acknowledgment adopted, and MRCs are welcome to use it.
- The External Relations committee request to engage county officials and share information.
- Shoreline Master Program workgroup activities.
- Forage fish sample processing situation with WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife

Public comment

There was no public comment.

* The next regular Commission meeting will be on Friday, July 30 via Zoom.*



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 Fisker (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



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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.



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- 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



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- 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.



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August 27, 2021 • 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Zoom – Conference call
Northwest Straits Commission meeting minutes

Attendees:

Commission Members: Elsa Schwartz (Island MRC-Chair), Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Chris Castner, Bob Cecile (Whatcom MRC), Alan Clark (Clallam MRC), Tim Ellis (Snohomish MRC), Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Jennifer Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership alternate), Pete Haase (Skagit MRC), Christina Koons (San Juan MRC), Nan McKay, Julia Parrish, Jeff Taylor (Jefferson MRC)

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Dana Oster, Leslie Perkins, Allie Simpson, Leah Robison

Others in Attendance: Commissioner Mark Ozias (Clallam County), Barbara Bennett (Island MRC), Rebecca Paradis (Clallam MRC staff), Alisa Taylor

Absent: Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership)

Meeting Opening

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment.

Approval of Minutes

The Commission approved the minutes from the July 30 Northwest Straits Commission meeting as written by consensus.

Welcome Remarks

Commissioner Mark Ozias from Clallam County joined the meeting to introduce himself and provide welcome remarks to the Commission. He noted his appreciation the Northwest Straits Initiative's local model and commended the members for their dedication during COVID-19 virtual conditions. He encouraged volunteers to continue to deepen their relationships with their local officials and staff for potential cross training and data sharing opportunities.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Lucas Hart reported on planning for the 2021 retreat and 2021 conference, which will be virtually held over two days on Thursday, September 23, 1:30pm-3:30pm and Friday, September 24, 10:00am-1:00pm. Return to in-person Commission meetings has been delayed due to COVID-19 conditions and the Department of Ecology facility access protocols.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia Parrish updated on working with the committee to generate a list of northwest-based scientists to provide brief presentations on their projects to the Commission. The goal is to cultivate public involvement and offer topics that may be of interest to MRCs.

Presentation on Shoreline Master Program Learning Group

Barbara Bennett from Island MRC presented the framework she created in Island County for all MRCs to participate in for the update process for local Shoreline Master Programs (SMP). This is a locally focused opportunity for MRCs to review and participate in these updates that occur every seven years in order to understand the content and process and to consider their priorities. The SMP applies in all counties, even if the specific issues are different. The learning group will meet in September and Barbara will facilitate for interested MRC members, staff, and affiliates.



Minutes

MRCs should consult with their county before providing SMP comments. The Commission acknowledged the importance and value of Barbara's work.

Business Items

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

- Lucas Hart introduced new Northwest Straits Commission staff member Leah Robison. She started on August 23, 2021 in the role of Ecosystem Projects Assistant and will be working on European green crab related tasks.
- Elsa shared that the Northwest Straits Initiative retreat planning committee has decided on a fully virtual format for this year's retreat on September 23, 1:30pm-3:30pm and September 24, 10:00am-1:00pm. Ecology facilities and other spaces will not be available for an in-person event, but it will be a valuable opportunity for reconnecting among members.
- Lucas announced that Caroline Gibson's memorial is planned for Sunday, October 24 at 4:00pm-7:00pm at the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend. Masks and COVID-19 vaccinations will be required for attendees.
- Leslie Perkins reported that the Northwest Straits Conference will be held as a virtual symposium series with a focus on climate change impacts and local action. The first session is on Thursday, November 18, 2021, from 3:30pm-5:00pm. A planning committee is working on the other three session topic themes and speakers held in December, January and February. All MRC members are encouraged to attend.

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission Update

Cecilia Gobin acknowledged the passing of NW Indian Fisheries Commission Chair Lorraine Loomis and the focus to honor her legacy and 40+ year service on the NW Indian Fisheries Commission. The NW Indian Fisheries Commission is re-engaging at local and state levels for work on Treaty Rights at Risk. Cecilia offered hard copies of the [2020 State of Our Watershed](#) report by requested.

Puget Sound Partnership Update

Jennifer Grimm reported the Partnership is busy working on the [2022-2026 Action Agenda for Puget Sound](#), moving from Phase 3 into Phase 4 development. Staff is carefully watching the proposed federal infrastructure package for opportunities to advocate for local projects and funding. The Puget Sound Partnership has just executed a 4-year funding award from EPA.

Northwest Straits Foundation: Written update provided in the pre-meeting materials.

MRC Updates

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

Clallam – Alan Clark

- The MRC held their annual Internship Celebration at the MRC August meeting. Internships are now complete and each intern did a great job presenting data, pictures and findings for their project's work.
- MRC Chair Tim Cochnauer presented an informative PowerPoint to the NW Straits Commission meeting about Clallam MRC's internship program.



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- Completing kelp surveys has been challenging this summer due to windy conditions. Freshwater Bay's larger bed was done and volunteers hope to return to do the smaller bed, along with Clallam Bay soon. Motorized surveys are also being planned.
- Pigeon Guillemot surveys will continue past the monitoring period as birds were observed taking fish back to nest burrows. Sites will continue to be monitored until there is no activity for two weeks.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- The Needs Assessment Overview document has been completed. It will be presented to Island County Commissioners at an upcoming work session and then distributed to interviewees. This document represents many hours of work conducting stakeholder interviews and analyzing take-a-ways, and will help drive future MRC decisions.
- Barbara Bennett developed the Shoreline Master Program learning group and other interested MRCs are invited to be part of the meetings starting in September.
- Island County MRC voted at the August meeting to adopt and read the tribal acknowledgement developed by NWSC.
- Dan Pederson passed away recently, he was integral to Island County MRC's past work history, especially with communications.
- NW Straits Foundation coordinated a Hoypus Point site visit for state and local agencies involved in the permitting process.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC installed a new rain garden at the corner of Franklin and Adams Streets in Port Townsend.
- A third kelp survey took place on August 20. A potential extended survey is being considered for September.
- Volunteers from both Jefferson and Clallam MRCs monitored Olympia oysters in Discovery Bay in late July. The population fared surprisingly well during the recent heatwave and data showed good recruitment from the previous year.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- The MRC is actively monitoring the Seabin pilot at Deer Harbor Marina, a joint project with San Juan County's Department of Environmental Stewardship. Volunteers clean out up to 30 pounds of captured biomass daily, resulting in two pounds of foam from micro-plastics removed each day!
- The Odlin County Park Eelgrass Protection Zone has been installed as the MRC's first anchor out zone in the County. Boater safety and marine stewardship outreach signage will be displayed for the remainder of the summer.
- At the MRC's request, the San Juan County Council sent a letter with comments to the Department of Ecology regarding the latest net pen guidance.

Skagit – Pete Haase

- Kimberly Cauvel, Environmental Reporter with the Skagit Valley Herald, participated in the kelp team's survey at Coffin Rocks. [Read her article here.](#)
- Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance/ Nearshore Monitoring Event: 31 volunteers, including students from the Salish Sea School, participated in small groups at the nearshore restoration event at Bowman Bay on August 17. Lisa Kaufman presented an overview of the restoration project to the volunteers and onlookers. Volunteer activities included weeding and mulching with compost over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the shoreline restoration area,



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picking up trash, forage fish spawning surveys, beach seining, and lots of great public interaction. The County water truck was used to apply 400 gallons of water over the nearshore plantings. This time there was no need to haul buckets of water! A few Surf smelt eggs were found during the forage fish surveys. Beach seining hauled in a bunch of adult surf smelt, a few post-larval surf smelt, one juvenile Chinook salmon, lots of perch, and a few greenlings.

- Forage Fish Survey Volunteers Participate in Washington Gear Up Program: Forage fish survey volunteers hosted an educational forage fish station at the Fidalgo Bay Resort for several small groups of Latinx kids from the Washington Gear Up Program in Burlington and Edison High School in Mount Vernon. It was part of a larger program that took place over the course of a three-week period with 7 or 8 different education stations that focused on the marine environment. Many of the kids have never even been to a beach before. The kids were very enthusiastic and eager to learn and had a great experience. The volunteers felt inspired just being a part of it.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- County Councilmember Megan Dunn and her staff person, Paula Rhyne, participated with the MRC kelp volunteers on kayaks to monitor kelp at Edmonds.
- County is scheduled to remove four derelict boats, and MRC staff are coordinating with partners including Everett PD, to potentially remove two new derelict boats at Howarth Park.
- Beach clean up planned for September 18 from 9:00am-12:00 noon using the EPA's "Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol (ETAP)" to quantify and assess the collected litter.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- The MRC Executive Committee interviewed a candidate to fill the vacant Conservation/ Environmental seat and MRC will consider confirmation at next meeting.
- The MRC voted to use the NWSC tribal acknowledgement and will contact Lummi Nation and the Nooksack Tribe to discuss how the MRC can strengthen working with the tribes in order to honor the commitment in the acknowledgement.
- North Sound Stewards alerted the MRC about the eelgrass meadow at Larrabee State Park. Vehicles launching their boats from the ramp tend to drive over the eelgrass at low tide due to the ramp being too short. MRC will discuss at September's meeting.
- The Northwest Straits Foundation is assessing a possible restoration project at Clayton Beach in Larrabee State Park. Both Whatcom and Skagit MRCs would collaborate on this site.

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:

- **Shoreline Master Program learning group:** Barbara Bennett from Island MRC presented the framework she created for MRCs to participate in the update process for local Shoreline Master Programs. The group will meet in September and Barbara will facilitate for interested MRC members, staff and affiliates.
- **Retreat:** Northwest Straits Commission and Foundation board members will meet for a virtual retreat on Thursday, September 23, 1:30pm-3:30pm and Friday, September 24, 10:00am-1:00pm.
- **Northwest Straits Conference:** The Northwest Straits Conference for all MRC members will be held virtually this year as a series of sessions starting on Thursday, November 18, 3:30pm-5:00pm, with a focus on climate change and local action.



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- **State of Our Watershed report:** The State of Our Watersheds report is available online. Cecilia Gobin offered to mail hard copies of the report to interested members. It can be requested at cgobin@nwifc.org.
- **Caroline Gibson's memorial:** To be held on Sunday, October 24, 2021 at 4:00pm-7:00pm at the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend (masks and COVID-19 vaccinations will be required).
- **COVID-19 pandemic status:** Elsa asked about any ideas to help keep MRC members engaged while meeting only virtually over next few months. She is pleased to see that so much field project work is continuing to be an opportunity to collaborate in person, in a safe manner outside.
- **Forage fish messaging:** Pete Haase asked for interested members to respond to Dana's poll to be able to schedule a meeting to work on messaging in support of forage fish spawning monitoring work by WA Conservation Corps crews.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The next regular Commission meeting is October 29, 2021, at 10:00am via Zoom.



Minutes

October 29, 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, Alan Clark (Clallam), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership alternate), Pete Haase (Skagit), Christina Koons (San Juan), Mike MacKay (Whatcom alternate), Troy McKelvey (Jefferson alternate), Julia Parrish

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Allie Simpson, Leslie Perkins, Leah Robison

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger (Northwest Straits Foundation), Jude Apple (Padilla Bay NERR), Jessica Espy (WSU Skagit), Austin Rose (Whatcom staff), Lynne Wenberg Davidson (Skagit alternate),

Absent: Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Nan McKay, Jeff Taylor (Jefferson)

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: The Commission approved the meeting calendar for 2022. The goal is to hold the February Commission meeting in person at Padilla Bay, if sufficient technology is available for a hybrid format. A NW Straits Initiative retreat date and format will be determined later.

External Relations Committee: A draft reauthorization bill is in progress and Senator Murray's office is planning to share it for internal review. NOAA staff is briefing administrators on the NOAA-NW Straits Initiative relationship. There was no Senate action yet on the Congressionally Directed Spending request, which may have up to a 24-month spending window if passed. Lucas and Sasha have met with all of the MRCs to discuss potential projects and programs, and are seeking additional guidance on any potential project restrictions.

Science Advisory Committee: Sasha shared an update on the collaborative effort to generate a list of science-based presenters. This list will be used for presentations at future Commission meetings, and potentially MRC meetings, to share local work on topics of interest to the NW Straits Initiative.

Business items

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

- **Retreat feedback:** Lucas shared it was a good refresher on projects being done and helped reconnect people. Looks forward to working with the Foundation and the Commission on initiatives.
- **Climate change symposium:** November 18 will be the first session of four-part series, focused on impacts to recreation. The Planning Committee is working on topics and speakers for the following sessions. This is intended to be for Northwest Straits Initiative members and MRC members to attend, not open to the public.
- **Congressionally Directed Spending:** Lucas and Sasha met with each MRC in anticipation of the NW Straits Commission potentially receiving \$3 million in funding when the federal budget passes. Each MRC is working on a list of potential projects and programs for the funding, which is hoped to have a 24 month spending window. Staff requests the lists be provided for the Executive Committee on November 15, 2021.



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- **Forage fish messaging:** The draft support letter to WA Department of Fish and Wildlife for WA Conservation Corps forage fish sample processing work will be reviewed by the Executive Committee in November and Commission in December. Lucas will also inform the Department of Ecology. The working group is also working on collateral informational pieces. Commissioners asked if this letter and information can be provided to legislators eventually. No action is planned on this at the moment, but the letter could serve as a template.
- **Staff updates:** Dana will be on maternity leave from October to March. Applicants are being interviewed for a project coordinator position to support the green crab and kelp projects.

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don Hunger reported on the virtual workshop on vegetation management for shoreline landowners held in October. Clayton Beach is a combined opportunity for Skagit and Whatcom MRCs to work together on an armor removal project and monitoring plan. A new intern is now on board at the Foundation. He also encouraged everyone to attend SeaFeast in Bellingham over the weekend.

Puget Sound Partnership Update

Jennifer Grimm announced a series of virtual workshops to identify and generate actions for the 2022-2026 Action Agenda that are needed to implement strategies. The Partnership will hold workshops in November and December, partners from around the region are encouraged to attend by [registering here](#).

MRC Updates

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

Clallam – Alan Clark

- MRC Coordinator, Chair and Fellow assisted WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife with their purple sea urchin sampling in Port Angeles.
- Several MRC members virtually attended marine mammal oil spill response workshop September 8th.
- Continuing to collect the monthly samples at Cline Spit and Ediz Hook and East Elwha Beach. The samples are being stored at the County until WDFW is ready to accept them. The last two months the samples from Cline Spit have contained lots of eggs.
- MRC Coordinator, Rebecca Paradis and Clallam Habitat Biologist, Cathy Lear presented the NW Straits Shorelands agreement to the Clallam County Board of Commissioners on October 18. It was approved and scheduled for signatures on October 26.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- The MRC, in partnership with Whidbey Island Conservation District, hosted a volunteer stewardship event to perform vegetation maintenance at Cornet Bay on October 8. 12 volunteers and staff removed milk thistle from the newest restoration area.
- The MRC has been having ongoing discussions about the key takeaways from the Needs Assessment, and this will inform strategic planning for the next 3-5 years.
- Snohomish and Island County MRCs are working together to update the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area Conservation Action Plan report card.
- Lead staff Anna Toledo has returned from maternity leave.

Jefferson – Troy McKelvey



Minutes

- The Jefferson County MRC Dive Safety Manual was reviewed by the County attorney and approved by the Board of County Commissioners on September 13, which will allow MRC volunteer divers to resume maintenance work for the no-anchor zone buoy fields.
- Taylor Shellfish and one MRC member spread 3 cubic yards of oyster shell at the Powerlines Site in Discovery Bay on October 1.
- The MRC launched a new series coupling speaker presentations with hands-on, in-the-field activities in partnership with the Port Townsend Marine Science Center. The first coupled events were a presentation on marine debris and microplastics on September 15 and a beach cleanup on the 18th.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- Initial planning meetings taking place to help scope out the MRCs work plan. Work focus currently is on quarterly reporting and starting planning for the annual retreat.
- Good participation at the fall Great Islands Cleanup on September 25.
- The Seabin pilot project has been removed from the Deer Harbor Marina and will be moved to another marina. Initial review indicates success with floating debris removal.
- The MRC has begun to organize around their new projects including the finalization of the Marine Stewardship Area Plan and starting the Derelict Vessel Prevention Program.
- The MRC provided guidance to the county on the feedback to the Department of Ecology on their Scope of Work for their Emergency Response Towing Vessel modeling effort.

Skagit – Pete Haase

- Final MRC project reports for Pinto Abalone Restoration, Salish Sea Stewards, and Kids on the Beach have been completed and are now available on the Skagit MRC website.
- The Salish Sea Stewards virtual social/presentation was held on October 20 with 22 Salish Sea Stewards in attendance. Dr. Jesse Humbert of Walla Walla University gave a presentation on the Pacific Red Octopus.
- Forage fish surveys continue in a better than average year for surf smelt spawning at our survey sites. The forage fish volunteers provided education and outreach to the Salish Sea School students in conducting forage fish surveys at Fidalgo Bay Day as part of Orca Recovery Day.
- In September, volunteers planted and watered 500 dune grasses and applied additional mulch/compost at Bowman Bay.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- Snohomish MRC in partnership with Tulalip Tribes and the Stillaguamish Tribe will be deploying 7 mussel watch cages in Snohomish County on November 5 in partnership with WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife.
- Snohomish County MRC has secured funds to work with WSU Snohomish County Beach Watchers to hold regular quarterly shoreline cleanup events for 2022.
- The joint Island County – Snohomish County Port Susan project team gave presentations to both the Stillaguamish Watershed Council and the Island County Salmon Recovery Technical and Citizen Committee last month on the upcoming work on the Port Susan Conservation Action Plan.
- Hosted a successful beach cleanup on September 18 at Kayak Point County Park for International Coastal Cleanup Day. This event was in coordination with the WSU Beach Watchers, WSU Waste Warriors, and Zero Waste Washington, and utilized the Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol developed by the EPA. Resulted in 1,338 marine debris objects totaling over 56 pounds of trash collected and precisely documented.



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Whatcom – Mike MacKay

- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic seat. This vacancy is advertised on the MRC homepage.
- Elizabeth Lorence was officially appointed to the MRC in September to fill a Conservation/Environmental seat.
- Eric Grossman, US Geological Survey, shared information about the Puget Sound Coastal Storm Modeling System (CoSMoS) project to help inform how the MRC may use the model to inform future monitoring projects. [Click here](#) for the recorded presentation.
- Four beach cleanups were hosted on September 18 in celebration of the International Coastal Cleanup. 300-400lbs of trash was removed from Locust Beach, with the help of 28 volunteers.
- The MRC will be doing outreach at the Bellingham SeaFeast on October 30. Whatcom County Public Works will have a booth sharing information about their programs supporting the marine ecosystem/water quality.

Quiet Sound Presentation

Rachel Aronson, Program Director, introduced herself and presented to the Commission the establishment and emerging work of Quiet Sound, a Maritime Blue initiative. Quiet Sound originated from the Governor's Orca Recovery Task Force with the mission to reduce acoustic and physical impacts to Southern Resident Orcas from large commercial vessels. The goal is to create a process for finding real-time information on location of whales and provide navigation details needed for vessels to mitigate any impacts. This is a federal, state, local and philanthropic collaboration among the Ports, WSDOT Ferries, Makah Tribe, Maritime Industry, NOAA, Puget Sound Partnership, and U.S. Coast Guard.

Much is being learned from the successful Canadian program "[ECHO](#)". Aspects of Quiet Sound are voluntary compliance, science based and data driven, transparent, and respectful of treaty rights. Working group members will be seated and early actions initiated over next few months. Following the presentation, the Commission members asked about mapping noise sources in the Puget Sound and the need for a baseline, potential for MRCs to help with sighting work, San Juan's Whale Wise initiatives, and cooperation with the commercial shipping industry. More information can be found by [clicking link here](#).

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights which is sent on a separate document to MRC staff and representatives to share with their MRCs:

- Upcoming climate change symposium series for MRCs, held virtually on November 18, December 16, January 20, and February 17 from 3:30pm-5:00pm.
- MRCs continue to work on creating a list of potential projects for Congressionally Directed Spending.
- Interest in the presentation made to Whatcom MRC by Eric Grossman (US Geological Survey) on their CoSMoS storm modeling and sea level rise. [Click link here](#). MRCs can be informed on how future project work may be impacted.
- Rachel Aronson from Quiet Sound presented on the emerging efforts to monitor and protect orcas from noise levels in the Puget Sound. She invites members to reach out to her with any questions, [more info here](#).
- There was interest in the data and lessons learned from the San Juan MRC Seabin pilot project that removes floating debris. The Seabin requires daily maintenance, currently done by a volunteer.
- Compliments to Snohomish MRC for removal of four derelict boats. The NW Straits Foundation is looking to help support and expand that program.



Minutes

Public comment

There was no public comment.

*Next regular Commission meeting will be on Friday, December 10, 2021, via Zoom



Minutes

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

Attendees:

Commission Members: Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Barbara Bennett (Island alternate), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership alternate), Pete Haase (Skagit), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Nan McKay, Christina Koons (San Juan), Alan Clark (Clallam), Julia Parrish

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Allie Simpson, Leah Robison, Jeff Whitty

Others in Attendance: Jackie Lindsey (COASST), Jude Apple (Padilla Bay Reserve) Jessica Espy (WSU Skagit Shore Stewards), Austin Rose (Whatcom staff), Troy McKelvey (Jefferson alternate), Diane Hennebert (Skagit alternate), Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Phil Salditt (NW Straits Foundation board)

Absent: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Chris Castner

Welcome and Introductions

Vice Chair Tom Cowan opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment. The Commission approved the minutes from the August 27 and October 29 meetings as written by consensus.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom Cowan provided an update on the topics covered at the Executive Committee meeting, including a discussion about the opportunity for federal Congressionally Directed Spending. The fiscal year 2022 federal budget is now operating under a Continuing Resolution that will extend into mid-February, which means a delay in receiving any funding from a new FY22 budget. The letter to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in support of their partnership on forage fish spawning surveys was finalized and sent to contacts at the agency and key legislators.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia reported that the Committee has provided some support to Commission staff in the climate symposium planning. She will facilitate the January 20 event. The Committee is considering a follow on workshop after the series wraps up to brainstorm next steps. The Committee is also finalizing a list of local scientists who can provide a science spot at upcoming NW Straits Commission meetings to link MRCs to science. The next step is to organize the list and prioritize invitations. A planned future action for the Committee is to document the structure and purpose of the Science Advisory Committee to ensure it is useful to the MRCs and the NW Straits Commission.

External Relations Committee: Lucas reported that Senator Murray's office is working on draft reauthorization bill language. The text is being reviewed by senate council. The Committee expects to see an updated draft soon.

Business items

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

- **Climate change symposium:** The second symposium in the series will be Thursday, December 16 from 3:30-5pm. This session will focus on coastal resilience, with presentations from Ian Miller from Washington Sea Grant, and Lisa Kaufman from the NW Straits Foundation. A recording of the event will be available for those who are unable to attend.



Minutes

- **Staff updates:** Leslie Perkins' last day was on November 12. Lucas will work with the Department of Ecology to reclassify the position and update the position description before reposting. Jeff Whitty, Project Coordinator, started on December 1 to support the European green crab and kelp projects.
- **Forage fish:** Leah reported that she held a forage fish spawn monitoring training with WDFW at Padilla Bay on December 9th. The training was well attended and another training will be planned for summer 2022.

Presentation - COASST: Jackie Lindsey, Science Coordinator for COASST (<https://coasst.org/>), presented on their Marine Debris program. She described how COASST started as a beach/seabird program in the 1990s, and they now focus a lot on marine debris with their citizen science programs. Her presentation included a description of how and where they do their work, a brief summary of results, and how COASST fits into the Salish Sea community. Following the presentation was a question and answer period. Staff shared a copy of the presentation with NW Straits Commission members, and it is available on request.

Partner updates:

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission: No update at this time.

Puget Sound Partnership: Jenn reported that the Partnership expects the Governor to roll out a salmon recovery package this month in a budget to be issued December 16. Plans are underway for the 2022 Puget Sound Day on the Hill. Organizers are still trying to determine whether the event will be virtual or hybrid. The Leadership Council reviewed 2022 legislative priorities. The group did not have any decisions yet, but scheduled a special meeting for further discussion. Draft Action Agenda components will be available for review in January, followed by a public draft of the Action Agenda for review in March.

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don introduced Phil Salditt as a new board member and reported that there are three new members: Phil Salditt, Adam Laurio, and Clay Walton-House. The Foundation is ramping up end-of-year fundraising. The Caroline Gibson Scholarship Fund has continued to grow and they are building out that program in order to roll out scholarships for students this year. He noted that the recent heavy rain has impacted timelines for some shoreline restoration work. The Foundation and partners celebrated the last post-restoration monitoring event at Bowman Bay. A recording of the Foundation's recent vegetation management workshop for shoreline homeowners is now [available online](#).

MRC Updates

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

Clallam – Alan Clark

- The Clallam County Board of Commissioners signed the NW Straits agreement on October 26.
- Continued forage fish sampling on Cline Spit, Ediz Hook and Elwha River beach. Alan noted that they are still seeing eggs at Cline Spit.
- The MRC will present to the Board of County Commissioners in February.

Island – Barbara Bennett

- Outreach – Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area: The MRC was matched with a student team at the Evans School of Public Policy and Governance to assist with the review of new and emerging scientific and policy



Minutes

information to inform the joint Island-Snohomish MRC project to update the Port Susan MSA Conservation Action Plan report card.

- Advisory – Pinto Abalone: Jill Lipoti drafted a comment letter on the Pinto Abalone Recovery Plan, which the MRC approved to bring to the Board of County Commissioners for their consideration.
- Staff Change: After 7 years with the MRC, Anna Toledo has accepted a position with WA DNR, and is stepping down from her role as MRC Coordinator.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The Jefferson MRC is co-hosting a second speaker event with the Port Townsend Marine Science Center. The virtual presentation is scheduled for 6-7pm on December 3, featuring Bridget Trosin (WA Sea Grant) and Dave Wilkinson who will be presenting on king tides, projected sea level rise for Port Townsend, and local monitoring efforts. Following the presentation, participants will be encouraged to use MyCoast for submitting observations throughout the king tide season. Registration is at <https://tinyurl.com/kingtidesandslr>.
- The MRC is prepping for work in 2022: a contract for sidescan sonar surveys for detecting lost crab pots in Discovery Bay, a survey protocol for locating lost crab pots using a submersible ROV, a QAPP and contract for eelgrass surveys near Port Townsend, and permits to expand the Olympia oyster habitat enhancement site in Discovery Bay. The MRC is in communications with WDFW about acquiring a permit/approval for removing lost crab pots detected using side scan sonar and/or ROV.
- The MRC elected Brenda Johnson to serve as chair and Troy McKelvey to serve as vice chair in 2022.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- The MRC held a successful and productive retreat in early December, their first in-person event.

Skagit – Pete Haase

- 2022 Salish Sea Stewards Training- 2022 Salish Sea Stewards training program starts March 1 - May 24, 2022. Classes will be held in person Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. Registration deadline is February 22, 2022.
- Bowman Bay Monitoring/Volunteer Appreciation- On December 3, after 7 years of monitoring at Bowman Bay, volunteers conducted the final beach seining session. To help celebrate, the Northwest Straits Foundation hosted a Volunteer Appreciation BBQ. Twenty-three people attended. Pete expressed appreciation for Jason Morgan's efforts to make it successful.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The Island County MRC application a [Student Consulting Lab](#) team from the Evan's School was approved and they have been matched with students for the Port Susan work! The Snohomish MRC has hired ESA consultants to assist their part of the scope of work.
- Snohomish County Surface Water Management has secured funds and is supporting a scope of work to lead the post-restoration monitoring effort at Meadowdale. Elisa Dawson is the project manager for SWM for this work.
- Snohomish MRC in partnership with Tulalip Tribes and the Stillaguamish Tribe deployed seven mussel watch cages in Snohomish County on November 5 in partnership with WDFW.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile



Minutes

- All overwater structures have been removed from the Aiston Preserve shoreline (formally Lummi Island Quarry).
- Two members have been in contact with Lummi Nation regarding two sunken trawlers in the Sandy Point marina. The group discussed funding that could be made available for their removal.
- The Drayton Harbor Shellfish Advisory Committee is concerned about the increasing pressure of recreational boats anchoring or mooring inside Drayton Harbor, outside of the two marinas. There is potential for the MRC to partner with the Drayton Harbor Shellfish Advisory Committee to establish voluntary no-anchor zones.

Presentation – European green crab

Allie Simpson shared a presentation on the highlights of the 2021 European green crab trapping season in Drayton Harbor. The team caught 146 green crabs this season, which was lower than the 2020 catch rate. Trapping locations included core sites, as well as an intensive grid survey trapping effort. In addition to the trapping efforts, the team worked with Whatcom MRC to conduct outreach to the local community both during the grid survey and through an educational mailer. Allie also shared information on plans for the 2022 season, which include expanding trapping efforts into Skagit County, starting a volunteer program, and working with a WCC crew. More information on how to report a green crab is available here: <https://wsg.washington.edu/crabteam/greencrab/report/>

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff sent as a separate document to MRC staff and representatives to share with their MRCs:

- Upcoming climate change symposium series for MRCs, held virtually on December 16, January 20, and February 17 from 3:30pm-5:00pm.
- COASST information and opportunities (www.coasst.org).
- Shoreline Master Program workgroup for MRCs, led by Barbara Bennett. Reach out to Barbara to stay informed or join the group (bennbluw@gmail.com)
- Jefferson MRC's planned storm surge project, evaluating impacts of storm surge using boat launch sites as proxy locations.
- Update on new NW Straits Foundation board members.
- Congressionally directed spending – update on Continuing Resolution through mid-February.
- 2021 European green crab update, including the area of concern at Lummi Sea Pond ([related article](#)).

Public comment

There was no public comment.

*The next Commission meeting will be on Friday, January 28, 2022, via Zoom.