



Minutes

January 28, 2022 • 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Zoom – Conference call
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

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

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

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Rebecca Mahan (Clallam MRC), Julie Schlenger (Snohomish-Alternate)

Absent: Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Nan McKay, Christina Koons

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment. The Commission approved the minutes from the December 10 meeting as written by consensus.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom Cowan updated the Commission on the December 2021 and January 2022 meetings. The Committee discussed the possibility of a retreat, but recommends deferring until it could be held in person. The Committee is planning to draft a policy on providing letters of support in order to clarify the process for future requests. The Committee also considered the potential for an in-person conference in 2022 and staff has tentatively secured a venue. Tom also noted several bills that are currently proposed for the 2022 legislative session that are of interest, although the Commission does not take any position on them.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia Parrish reported on recent activities of the Committee. The Committee has engaged with local scientists and extended invitations to present at Commission meetings, which will begin next month. The Committee has also taken the first steps to developing terms of reference for the Committee, which will be brought to the full Commission at a later date for input.

External Relations Committee: Chris Castner reported on recent activity on the draft Northwest Straits Initiative reauthorization bill, noting that there is positive progress on ensuring that the language of the bill is concise and clear. The potential funding for Northwest Straits through Congressionally Directed Spending is still in suspense as the federal FY22 budget is delayed through a Continuing Resolution that goes through mid-February. The Committee's next meeting will be held on February 2.

Business items

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

- Jeff Whitty shared information about his current activities and ideas for an implementation/coordination strategy related to the Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan.
- Allie reminded the group about the fourth climate change symposium on February 17, 2022 at 3:30pm. The event will be more interactive to allow for discussion between MRC members.



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- Allie reported on the eelgrass no-anchor zone project that is now underway with US Fish and Wildlife funding that started as of January 1. Commission staff is working with MRCs and the Foundation on the permitting phase.
- A tentative 2022 in-person conference is scheduled for November 18-19 at Maple Hall in La Conner, Skagit County. MRC members are encouraged to save the date and more information will be shared as planning begins.
- Sasha will share the brief Commission meeting highlights with all members of the Commission, where previously these were sent only to MRC representatives to share with their MRC. Commissioners can respond to that email to opt out of that correspondence at any time.

Partner updates:

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin shared updates on four key areas:

Treaty rights at risk – There is follow up with federal partners on [Treaty Rights at Risk](#), particularly around riparian and nearshore habitat issues related to how the Army Corps of Engineers and NOAA determine impacts from permitted structures. There is a need to do a cumulative effects analysis at the WRIA or Salish Sea scale to ensure that the total impact is considered.

Recreational impacts to treaty rights – They are working with state co-managers (such as WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife) on updating their recreational strategy plans, particularly around marine, freshwater and upper terrestrial areas.

[Lorraine Loomis Act](#) – Tribal leadership is working with the Governor's office on how to proceed with the bill in consideration of comments received in a recent committee hearing. While the bill is named after an important tribal elder, Cecilia noted that the bill is about salmon, which should be important to everyone.

[Pinniped predation on salmonids](#) – Tribes are working with WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife and the WA Academy of Sciences to convene a panel on pinniped predation on salmonids. The panelists are now listed and they hope to begin work in late February to develop guiding questions for the panel. There will be public workshops in the future related to this work.

Puget Sound Partnership: Jenn Grimm reported on four topics from the Puget Sound Partnership:

Upper Skagit watershed – Imperial Metals recently returned mining rights at the upper Skagit headwaters. More information is in a [Seattle Times](#) article, and the Governor has proposed \$4.5 million in the budget for this purpose.

The Army Corps of Engineers released their spend plan for infrastructure assistance, which did not include fish passage at Howard Hanson dam, but does include funding for infrastructure repairs to the Ballard Locks.

Governor Inslee recently issued an [emergency proclamation](#) for support on European green crab in the Lummi sea pond and elsewhere.



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The [2022-26 Puget Sound Action Agenda](#) is now out for board review through early February. The Puget Sound Partnership will have an online Action Agenda Explorer tool to make the information more accessible and user friendly.

Northwest Straits Foundation: In addition to the written reports in the meeting materials, Don Hunger reported out on current activities of the Foundation:

The [Caroline Gibson scholarship](#) application is now online and was sent to Western Washington University, University of Washington and The Evergreen State College. This is the first cycle and the future annual cycle will run in parallel with the academic year.

The Foundation is developing a business plan for an internship program, and expect to reach out to MRCs in about a month to solicit feedback.

Many of the Foundation's current projects are in the permitting or feasibility stage, including Hoypus Point, Polnell Point and Clayton Beach.

The Foundation's Passport to Marine Adventure will be getting a refresh for 2022, incorporating feedback from participants that they would like more interaction at the site. They are hoping to also make it web/app based. The Foundation will be checking back in with MRCs for site recommendations.

MRC Updates

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

Clallam – Alan Clark

- We added 3 new members one being the Lower Elwha Tribal Representative.
- Several MRC members and Coordinator attended Oiled Wildlife Volunteer Training with Dept. of Ecology.
- Marine Critter Outreach/Education cards are being distributed to local venues.
- Continued forage fish sampling on Cline Spit and Ediz Hook.
- January 27th Mussel cages are being collected and sent to the lab for Biotoxin analysis.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- Forage Fish: Continued forage fish sampling at Hoypus Point, Cornet Bay, Sunlight Shores, Maple Grove, Hidden Beach, and Glendale. Monitoring resumed at Seahorse Siesta in November.
- Advisory – Pinto Abalone: Jill Lipoti drafted a comment letter on the Pinto Abalone Recovery Plan, which the MRC and the Board of County Commissioners approved. It was submitted at the end of the year
- Staff Change: Island MRC has a new Coordinator – Kelly Zupich!

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- In January, the rain garden subcommittee will be conducting site visits at all MRC co-sponsored rain gardens to assess maintenance needs.
- The MRC adopted a new project focused on storm surge and total water level monitoring.



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- The MRC voted in new officers: Chair – Brenda Johnson (Dist. 2), Vice Chair – Troy McKelvey (Recreation), NWSC Rep – Jeff Taylor (Dist. 2), NWSC Alt – Sarah Fisken (Dist. 3)

San Juan – Phil Green

- The MRC held their annual retreat on December 2nd.
- The MRC and County's Southern Resident killer whale efforts and Plastic Free Salish Sea initiative will be included in the 2022 Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference.
- The MRC continues to make progress on the MSA Plan update

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- Kayak Kelp Survey Data: Skagit MRC's kelp survey data has been selected as one of the areas to be included in an additional multi-year trend analysis to inform the Puget Sound Kelp Canopy Vital Signs.
- MRC Project Planning Retreat: The MRC is in the process of planning a retreat to evaluate and prioritize the list of projects for federal appropriation funding.
- MRC-Salish Sea School Intern: An intern has been selected for this pilot program to work on a forage fish monitoring project at March's Point. Field work will occur Feb-October. The intern will present results to the MRC in January 2022. This MRC Intern project is part of a pilot program and is just one several other intern projects under the Salish Sea School STARS program (Students Training as Research Scientists), including stormwater monitoring, beach debris, orcas, and marine birds.
- MRC Project Evaluation: MRC member, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, developed a new, easy to follow, three-pronged approach for MRC members to evaluate and prioritize MRC projects. A retreat will be held in April, to finalize the list of projects.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- Snohomish County's contractor has completed the removal of four vessels from the Snohomish Estuary area. The total cost of the removals was nearly \$115,000, which will be reimbursed at 90% by DNR. Additional information about the four vessels removed can be found at www.snocomrc.org/projects/derelict-vessel-removal.
- The MRC conducted interviews for new MRC members on December 13 and 20. The MRC will be looking to fill up to 2 vacancies, in addition to a change in the Stillaguamish Tribal Representative. Franchesca Perez will re-join the MRC in 2022 to serve as the tribal representative upon the departure of Kip Killebrew, who is retiring at the end of 2021.
- The MRC has nominated three new members – Franchesca Perez (Stillaguamish Tribe Representative), Bob Margulis, and Allan Hicks – to Snohomish County Council. We are currently waiting formal appointment by the council.
- The MRC contracted with DNR to complete marine vegetation monitoring from Everett to Edmonds this summer. DNR found eelgrass was present at 21 out of 22 sites sampled, and at 192 of 224 transects sampled. A draft report is being reviewed by the subcommittee, with a final report due by January 31.
- The MRC finalized the Port Susan Stakeholder List in December. The MRC has also coordinated a draft of the Stakeholder Survey with project consultant ESA, staff from Snohomish County, and the Joint Island-Snohomish Port Susan Team. The next Joint Island-Snohomish Port Susan Team Meeting is scheduled for January 25.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile



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- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position and a Conservation/Environmental interest position. These vacancies are advertised on the [MRC home page](#).
- Whatcom County was awarded \$100,000 from the Department of Ecology to support the use of CoSMoS (modelling developed by USGS) to inform incorporation of sea level rise (SLR) in the Shoreline Management Program. MRC staff will be joining a workgroup to develop a vulnerability and risk assessment for Whatcom County's marine and riverine shorelines. The MRC will be informed of the process and be able to provide input.

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff will share as a separate document to MRC staff and the Commission:

- Upcoming climate change symposium series event for MRCs February 17 from 3:30pm-5:00pm.
- 2022 Conference dates – November 18-19, 2022 at Maple Hall in La Conner is the date and location if an in-person event is possible.
- The Northwest Straits Foundation's Caroline Gibson scholarship application period is open in February.
- The Northwest Straits Foundation is hoping to plan some summer social gatherings and will reach out to MRCs if there are opportunities.
- The Clallam MRC's developed some critter cards for community outreach. Contact Rebecca Mahan (rparadis@co.clallam.wa.us) if your MRC is interested in getting copies.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

*The next Commission meeting will be on Friday, February 25, 2022, via Zoom.



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February 25, 2022 • 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Zoom – Conference call
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership alternate), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Christina Koons (San Juan), Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Julia Parrish, Chris Castner, Nan McKay

Commission Staff: Dana Oster, Allie Simpson, Leah Robison, Jeff Whitty

Others in Attendance: Austin Rose (Whatcom), Troy McKelvey (Jefferson), Christy Pattengill-Semmens (REEF), Janna Nichols (REEF), Adam Lorio (NW Straits Foundation), Phil Salditt (NW Straits Foundation), Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation)

Absent: Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Alan Clark (Clallam), Tim Ellis (Snohomish)

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment. The Commission approved the minutes from the January 28 meeting as written by consensus.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom Cowan updated the Commission on the February 2022 meeting. The Committee discussed the tentative in-person conference in La Conner November 18 and 19 at Maple Hall. The Committee discussed the NW Straits Commission funding policy change, as further detailed in the report included in the meeting packet. The policy will be brought to the Commission for adoption at a later date.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia Parrish reported on the recent activities of the Committee. The Committee has continued to work on the Articles of Association. The Committee has developed and scheduled the first few months of the new program engaging local scientists. This program will give NW Straits Commission members a deeper insight into relevant local science and opportunities for involvement. The first presentation of this series was by Christy Pattengill-Semmens with REEF. The four-part Climate Change Symposium series finished with the last session on February 17. The Committee would like participants to complete the [follow-up evaluation](#) to provide input on the symposium series.

External Relations Committee: Chris Castner reported on the recent activity on the draft NW Straits Initiative reauthorization bill. He reported that there is no change in the status of the bill, and the next step will be for Senator Murray's staff to send the draft bill to NOAA. The Committee also discussed opportunities for conversations with legislators during Puget Sound Day on the Hill to thank them for past support and discuss reauthorization. There are no changes in the status for the potential funding for Northwest Straits through Congressionally Directed Spending as the FY22 budget is delayed through a Continuing Resolution through March 11.

Director's Report: Elsa conveyed Lucas's updates.

- Staff Updates: Dana has returned and will be working four days per week starting March 1. Progress on filling the open administrative position continues. The reclassification phase is almost complete. Recruiting will follow reclassification.



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- Maritime WA National Heritage Area recognizes our state's unique and diverse maritime culture. This new designation supports our coastal communities in celebrating, maintaining, and sharing their water-based stories. A draft management plan for this area has been released. Comments can be provided in several ways, including through a survey that focuses on the key components of the plan:
<https://preservewa.org/programs/maritime-national-heritage-area/mw-nha-get-involved/>
- Legislative Update: The session ends March 10. Here are some bills that are being tracked
 - SB5619: Provides funding to WA Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to identify priority kelp and eelgrass habitat. The bill has passed in the Senate and will go to the House.
 - HB1700: Provides funding to the DNR derelict vessel removal program. The bill has passed house and will go to the Senate.
 - SB5885: Mandates that replacement of existing shoreline structures must meet most up to date standards. The bill has passed Senate and will go to the house.
 - HB1117: This bill impacts state comprehensive planning by setting Net Ecological Gain standards. The bill is getting mixed testimony.
 - HB1099: Addresses climate change through state's comprehensive planning framework. Passed from Senate housing and local gov't committee. Will be taken up by full Senate.
 - SB5747: Would require consultation with tribes on oil and hazardous substance spill prevention and contingency plans. Passed from House Environment and Energy committee. Will be taken up by full House.
 - HB1172: Recognizes judicially affirmed and treaty-reserved fishing rights. Bill is in hearing in Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources and Parks.
 - SB5590: Extends expiration of the Marine Resources Advisory Council (ocean acidification advisory group) from 2022 to 2032. Passed Senate, Bill is now in the House Environment Committee.

Business items

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

- Green crab update: Jeff and Leah gave an update on green crab field preparation and presentations. Staff has been busy preparing for the upcoming field season in Whatcom and Skagit counties by coordinating efforts with WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife, WA Sea Grant, Padilla Bay Reserve, local landowners, and local shellfish farmers. The team has also made several presentations on green crabs (e.g. crab ID and what to do if you see a green crab). Staff is also happy to announce that they will be able to work with a WA Conservation Corps and Veterans Conservation Corps crews during the 2022 trapping season. To help with the intensive removal efforts in Whatcom and Skagit counties, staff is starting a pilot volunteer program. MRCs members in these counties received a recruitment announcement for participating in the boots-in-the-mud work later this spring. In addition to trapping, there will also be education and outreach opportunities that would benefit from volunteer support.

Presenting Scientist

Christy Pattengill-Semmens from Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) presented on Linking Citizen Science to Ocean Conservation. Citizen scientists are pushing the field and filling in the data gaps. Opportunities like the REEF Volunteer Fish Surveys provide authentic learning opportunities to connect people to the natural world.



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The extensive data collected in this global project has contributed to many research projects and supported management decisions. In Washington, data REEF collected was useful in assessing the sunflower sea star, which led to the species being listed as critically endangered. REEF data was also used in a case study of rockfishes in Puget Sound. MRC members can make this program more visible to their community members by participating and sharing the Volunteer Fish Survey Project: www.REEF.org.

Partner updates:

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin shared updates on three key areas:

[Treaty rights at risk](#)- Tribes reconvened regional meeting with federal tribal leaders. The issue of European green crab was elevated to federal agencies (Bureau of Indian Affairs and NOAA) to support with funding this work.

The Lorraine Loomis act in the legislature was pulled. A lot of the conversation is around putting money toward existing salmon protections in preparation for when a bill is in place. They discussed redirecting energy to seeking funding for salmon recovery work in the different Water Resource Inventory Areas.

They are working with member tribes to figure out the next steps on addressing the Coho mortality due to the tire chemical pollution (6 PPD Quinon). They would like to engage the EPA and their Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention. With EPA regulatory engagement, industry could be brought to the table to discuss safer alternatives and development of a national phase-out approach as part of the long term planning. There was tribal engagement and support on the research phase, now that there are solid findings; it is time to move towards the 'next steps'. Jenn Grimm shared an article with the Commission on this topic: <https://www.washington.edu/news/2020/12/03/tire-related-chemical-largely-responsible-for-adult-coho-salmon-deaths-in-urban-streams/>

Puget Sound Partnership: Jenn Grimm reported on updates from the Puget Sound Partnership and provided the link to the interactive tool for viewing legislative updates: ([Puget Sound Partnership - Legislative Updates \(wa.gov\)](#)). She gave a reminder about the Action Agenda which is open for public input and review from March 15 through April 15 (<https://www.psp.wa.gov/draft-action-agenda-development-review.php>). After this, it will make rounds to the boards and then go into effect. Puget Sound Day on the Hill will be hybrid and extended and more details will be provided next month.

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don Hunger reported out on current activities of the Foundation.

- Jason and Haley are continuing beach seining surveys.
- The Mount Erie rain garden project is underway and there will be upcoming volunteer opportunities.
- They are relaunching the marine passport to adventure and will produce a rack card with QR codes to share. The project is a fun engagement opportunity for community members to visit sites and become stewards and supporters.
- The first round of the Caroline Gibson scholarship fund was open for a short period and received five applicants. Two scholarships will be given in March. The next application cycle will align with the next academic year.
- The Foundation has been working with Clallam MRC on the outreach coasters project.



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- They are planning on engaging with Boeing on more projects in the future and will provide more details at a future meeting.
- They received a business planning grant that funds a position to initiate the new AmeriCorps program.

MRC Updates

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

Clallam – Alan Clark (not present)

- Met with the NW Straits Foundation about their Marine Critter Outreach/Education cards.
- Clallam MRC gave an update presentation to Clallam Board of County Commissioners.
- January 27th Mussel cages were collected and sent to the lab for Biotoxin analysis.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- Strategic Planning: The Committee is working to hire a consultant to help facilitate the in-person retreat on March 19.
- Staff in Training: Kelly Zupich has started her new position and is being onboarded.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The rain garden subcommittee conducted site visits at all MRC co-sponsored rain gardens in Port Townsend to assess maintenance needs and created a list of rain gardens overgrown with weeds/grass. The subcommittee is planning a work party on Mar 18 to add mulch to the Franklin and Adams St. rain garden and to weed some of the other rain gardens around Port Townsend.
- No anchor zones subcommittee members (Troy, Pam, Gordon, Bryan) serviced the buoys along the Port Townsend waterfront on Jan 22 – the MRC's first time back to diving since 2019. They swapped out the remaining 4 summer spar buoys with winter floats and checked the integrity of the ropes and hardware, relocating 6 of the anchors.
- Expansion of the Olympia oyster restoration site in South Discovery Bay received permit approvals from WDFW and Jefferson County (DNR, USACE and Ecology pending).
- Student ROV project is coming up for crab pot removal and will also be including a side scan sonar to get a survey of the bay. The experiments with the side scan fish finders is supported by folks from the University of Delaware.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- The MRC welcomed two new members.
- The MRC continues to make progress on the Marine Stewardship Area Plan update.
- A Joint letter to Islands Trust was provided with a request for the Canadian government to reposition an emergency towing tug to Victoria BC.
- MRC members are planning to volunteer with island oil spill association (IOSA)
- Plan to install the Seabin.
- Grade 5 classrooms hear killer whale tales.
- Working on eelgrass protection, and determining where protection buoys should be placed

Skagit – Diane Hennebert



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- Forage fish surveys at the Bowman Bay restoration site have temporarily been put on hold to help protect the northern elephant seal and her new pup until the pup is fully weaned.
- 19 participants have registered so far for the in-person Salish Sea Stewards training program that starts March 1st. Masks and vaccinations are required. Speakers have the option to present virtually. Salish Sea Stewards alumni are invited to attend virtually. The [2022 Training Schedule](#) is now available on the Skagit MRC website.
- Excited to hear that Boeing reached out. The Skagit MRC received some funding from them for stormwater improvement and the deliverable was the Anacortes rain garden that is underway.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis (not present)

- The Stakeholder Survey for the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area Conservation Action Plan Update project was launched on February 9. The survey will remain open until March 2, and respondents will have the opportunity to respond either in writing or with a follow up phone interview.
- The MRC contracted with DNR to complete marine vegetation monitoring from Everett to Edmonds this summer. DNR found eelgrass was present at 21 out of 22 sites sampled, and at 192 of 224 transects sampled. DNR submitted their final report on February 11 and presented on this work at the February 16 MRC Meeting.
- The MRC retrieved cages for the Mussel Watch program on January 31. One mussel cage (Kayak Point) was lost during heavy storms shortly after deployment in November, while the remaining 6 cages were successfully retrieved and returned to WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position and a Conservation/Environmental interest position. These vacancies are advertised on the MRC homepage <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/>.
- The MRC will be hosting education and outreach lessons with grade school kids. The program will demonstrate beach seining and will teach about salmon migration.
- The community boating center (CBC) would like to get involved with the MRC Kelp surveying. Allie presented on survey results at their last MRC meeting.
- There was a recent beach access issue with a landowner concerned about public access on the county road. The MRC will continue to monitor what is happening as this county road is used for marine access for various MRC programs.

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff will share as a separate document to MRC staff and the Commission:

- A reminder for the *tentative* in-person Northwest Straits conference November 18-19, 2022 at Maple Hall in La Conner. The Northwest Straits Commission plans to announce whether a conference will be held within the next month. A decision is pending public health recommendations.
- The REEF Volunteer Fish Survey Project is a citizen science opportunity for those who dive or snorkel. Learn more about how to get involved here: <https://www.reef.org/what-reef>.
- For invasive European green crab early detection and monitoring information, follow along with the work of Washington Sea Grant's Crab Team: [Get Involved With Crab Team – Washington Sea Grant](#).



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- In Whatcom and Skagit Counties, NWSC staff will be leading intensive green crab removal efforts. Contact Leah Robison (robison@nwstraits.org) for more information about MRC volunteer opportunities in these counties.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

*The next Commission meeting will be on Friday March 25, 2022, via Zoom.



March 25, 2022 • 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
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Northwest Straits Commission meeting

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Commission Members: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership alternate), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Julia Parrish, Nan McKay, Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Christina Koons (San Juan)

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Dana Oster, Allie Simpson, Leah Robison, Jeff Whitty

Others in Attendance: Dr. Drew Harvell, Rebecca Mahan (Clallam), Troy McKelvey (Jefferson), Frances Robertson (San Juan), Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation)

Absent: Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Alan Clark (Clallam), Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Chris Castner

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment. The Commission approved the minutes from the February 25 meeting as written by consensus.

Congressionally Directed Spending

Lucas shared details on the good news we received about the \$3 million in Congressionally Directed Spending secured by Senator Murray for fiscal year 2022. He explained that this was the result of 12 years of work. Lucas thanked the many entities and individuals that provided letters of support, and NWSC leaders who paved the way to this success over the years. This is a big milestone towards what we hope will eventually be an ongoing appropriation for the NW Straits Commission.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom Cowan noted the exceptional situation for the federal funding. Senator Murray would not have been able to secure these funds without the work of all the MRCs and the Commission. State biennial budget planning has started for the 2023/2025 biennium. The NW Straits Commission has several state funding priorities, including ongoing MRC funding, kelp and green crab funding.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia Parrish provided a short update, noting that the Science Advisory Committee is continuing its plan to bring scientists working in the Northwest Straits region in front of the Commission to share their work and potential opportunities for collaboration. This month Dr. Drew Harvell is presenting.

External Relations Committee: Chair Chris Castner was not in attendance. Lucas explained that Senator Murray is still leading on a reauthorization bill for the NW Straits Commission. Bill language is being reviewed by NOAA. We expect an update on progress from Senator Murray's office in the next few weeks.

Business items

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

- MRC grant amendments – Sasha shared a process and timeline for amending the current MRC grants, which include state funding as well as federal EPA funds via the Puget Sound Partnership. MRC staff have



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also received the information and Sasha will be working directly with MRCs to ensure that the agreement scope and budget are on track for year two.

- Northwest Straits MRC Conference – A tentative in-person conference is scheduled for November 18-19, 2022 at Maple Hall in La Conner, Skagit County. A planning committee will be forming in the near future to move forward with developing the content.
- Forage fish training – Leah reported that she is working with WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife to schedule a forage fish training for volunteers in July, potentially to be held on the Olympic peninsula. Leah will contact forage fish project leads with more information.
- Kelp conservation plan steering committee - Jeff reported that he is working on setting-up a Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Committee and is also working on a survey to begin investigating what actions within the Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan are and are not being undertaken by current projects within the Puget Sound.

Presenting Scientist – Dr. Drew Harvell

Dr. Drew Harvell shared a presentation on how disease outbreaks in eelgrass meadows are exacerbated by a warming climate. Eelgrass meadows are vital habitat in Puget Sound, providing habitat, carbon storage, and filtering pathogens. However, eelgrass meadows like much of our environment are under threat from a warming climate and urbanization. Disease in eelgrass could be an indicator of potential declines in local meadows. Conservation of this key habitat is critical, and understanding areas of vulnerable and resilient eelgrass meadows will play a vital role in preserving for the future.

Partner updates:

Puget Sound Partnership: Jenn Grimm gave another reminder about the Action Agenda which is open for public input and review from March 15 through April 15 (<https://www.psp.wa.gov/2022AAupdate.php>). Puget Sound Day on the Hill will be virtual and extended and more details will be provided next month. Jenn encouraged everyone to tune in on May 11 for the livestream and to sign on to the letter in advance at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeZGydou3331d6WPMSVFLJEm5bDate0XbNUFeXpekRc2FhOg/viewform>

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don Hunger shared information from the Foundation's recent newsletter, which included an introduction to the three students selected for the Caroline Gibson scholarships. The NW Straits Foundation will be reaching out to MRCs to discuss opportunities for AmeriCorps members to support MRC and partner projects.

MRC Updates

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

Clallam – Rebecca Mahan

- Marine Critter Outreach/Education cards all distributed to local venues.
- Organized Derelict Vessel presentation from WA Dept of Natural Resources staff to other MRCs and NW Straits Commission staff.



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Island – Elsa Schwartz

- Jan Holmes Coastal Volunteer of the Year Award: Frances Wood
- Strategic Planning: Our members have been preparing for our retreat by completing surveys and working on some pre-work provided by the retreat facilitator.
- Kelly Zupich: Is still working to get settled in the coordinator position. She is learning lots of new things and is very excited about this new challenge.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The rain garden subcommittee is organizing a rain garden work party on March 18th to weed and cleanup rain gardens across Port Townsend.
- The Fort Townsend forage fish team conducted its last survey for the season on March 9th, marking 7 years of monitoring this site.

San Juan – Frances Robertson

- The MRC continues to make progress on the Marine Stewardship Area Plan update.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- Kids on the Beach: 360 students from 4 schools are participating in the Kids on the Beach program this year: Sedro-Wooley, Conway, Concrete, and Anacortes middle schools. The level of involvement ranges from fully virtual to in-person. 13 volunteers signed up to assist with the 5 (in-person) field days in March and April.
- MRC Project Planning Retreat: The MRC Project Planning Retreat will be held in-person at Padilla Bay on Wednesday, April 13, 9am-11am. The retreat will be facilitated by Lucas and Allie. MRC members will have 3 weeks to evaluate and rank the 11 MRC project proposals prepared by the project leads prior to the retreat.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- Washington State Department of Natural Resources has withdrawn approximately 2,298.01 acres of aquatic lands from leasing as authorized under RCW 79.10.210 effective February 28, 2022. The data that the MRC collected in 2020 in partnership with Snohomish County Surface Water Management and DNR to survey and map the presence of marine vegetation within the Snohomish estuary helped inform this action by DNR. We are pleased to see the data that we gathered being used to help inform the protection of these important ecosystems.
- The Snohomish MRC partnered with WSU Snohomish County Beach Watchers to host a shoreline cleanup on March 3 at Howarth Park. Along with WSU Beach Watchers, MRC members and staff attended. Additional cleanups are planned on April 23 and September 17.
- Snohomish MRC closed the Port Susan Stakeholder Survey on March 2. The project team is continuing to conduct follow-up interviews with some stakeholders who expressed a preference to share information via one-on-one discussion. The Joint Island-Snohomish MRC Port Susan Team will reconvene in early April to debrief from the Stakeholder Survey and interviews and will begin to plan for stakeholder meetings this spring and summer.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position and a Conservation/Environmental interest position. These vacancies are advertised on the MRC homepage <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/>



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- Whatcom County Executive Sidhu ordered full re-opening of County facilities for public business, which allows for the MRC to meet in person and host a hybrid meeting if they wish. The MRC Executive Subcommittee will determine whether the committee meets in person when they meet to develop the meeting agenda each month. The committee agreed to meet in person for the April meeting.

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff will share as a separate document to MRC staff and the Commission:

- Senator Murray secured \$3M in Congressional funding for FY22. MRCs are prioritizing projects they would like to fund with this money. The Commission is waiting for further instructions from NOAA regarding timelines and other details.
- The NW Straits Commission will be applying for FY23 Congressional funds. Lucas notified MRC staff. Letters of support from counties or other MRC partners are greatly appreciated. Letters can be sent to hart@nwstraits.org by April 1. Contact Lucas if you plan to provide a letter.
- The NW Straits Commission is planning for future hybrid meetings, and has ordered an Owl camera to make those hybrid meetings more effective.
- The NW Straits Commission plans to hold an in-person conference November 18-19 at Maple Hall in La Conner. More information will be provided as planning commences.
- Leah Robison on NW Straits Commission staff is planning a forage fish spawn monitoring training for July. Contact Leah for more information (robison@nwstraits.org)
- The NW Straits Foundation is researching and designing an AmeriCorps marine conservation corps program. This is part of a planning grant to assess the need for a program in the Northwest Straits region. They will be reaching out to MRC staff starting in April to learn about emerging opportunities and to identify partnership opportunities where AmeriCorps members can provide capacity, knowledge, skills and abilities supporting local marine projects.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

*The next Commission meeting will be on Friday April 22, 2022, via Zoom.



Minutes

April 22, 2022 • 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Zoom – Conference call
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

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

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Dana Oster, Allie Simpson, Leah Robison, Jeff Whitty

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Hannah Liss (Puget Sound Partnership), P. Sean McDonald (UW), Sarah Fisker (Jefferson), Lee Whitford (NW Straits Foundation), Mary Margaret Stoll

Absent: Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Alan Clark (Clallam)

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment. The Commission approved the minutes from the March 25 meeting as written by consensus.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom Cowan noted the importance of the fiscal year 2022 Congressionally Directed Spending and that a draft budget is in progress. Tom also noted that the committee reviewed a proposed signage project for Skagit and concluded that it doesn't meet the Northwest Straits Commission's funding policy. The Committee has also been engaged in discussions about a county-proposed restructuring of the San Juan MRC.

The Committee also recommended that the Commission move forward with the regional voluntary no-anchor zone project, including contracting for a social marketing campaign and site monitoring surveys. The Commission moved and approved by consensus to move forward with the voluntary no-anchor zone project.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia Parrish noted that the Committee met and discussed the next round of "speed dating with a scientist", such as the green crab presentation at the meeting today. They are now lining up the next round of speakers. The Committee also discussed the terms of reference for the group, and have more to discuss on that at future meetings. She encouraged members of the Commission to reach out with thoughts on what the Committee should or should not do.

External Relations Committee: Chris Castner provided an update on the draft Northwest Straits reauthorization bill. We are currently waiting for the next steps, which include feedback from NOAA and the Department of Commerce on the draft bill. Regarding the FY22 Congressionally Directed Spending, there is a letter in the works to thank Senator Murray for her efforts to secure funds and her ongoing work on reauthorization.

Business items

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

- NW Straits Commission Chair and Vice-Chair Nominations – Nan McKay nominated Elsa Schwartz to serve as chair, Tom Cowan to serve as vice-chair. The Commission moved and approved by consensus to elect the slate of officers as presented.



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- Kelp monitoring season kickoff – Allie Simpson shared that the Commission hosted a kelp monitoring season kickoff this month, with a focused agenda on the protocol. Julia Ledbetter from WA Dept of Natural Resources shared detailed information about use of the protocols for collecting useful data.
- WCC Green Crab training – Jeff Whitty shared some slides from the recent training with the Washington Conservation Corps crew, in partnership with Padilla Bay Reserve. The crew training includes classroom and field work where they caught their first crab of the season.
- Forage fish training update – Forage fish volunteers are invited to join a Zoom training event on July 13. Leah Robison will send out the link and details.
- Staffing update – Lucas shared that the Program Coordinator position is now being recruited, and is open until filled.
- MRC Project Planning update - Lucas shared that NWS staff are working with MRCs to gather information on projects they would like to fund with FY22 federal funds. This information is being used to draft a preliminary budget. NWS staff are waiting for further guidance from NOAA.
- MRC State General Fund amendments – Sasha Horst shared an update on changes to the MRC funding in the state budget, which now requires that the first half be spent by June 30, 2022. She will work with each MRC to identify any potential shortfalls and execute the required amendments.

Presenting Scientist – Sean McDonald

P. Sean McDonald representing Crab Team presented on their work on European green crab. Crab Team is mainly made up of WA Sea Grant staff, and they provide early detection and scientific advisory services to the department. He noted that green crabs are not a threat individually, but collectively they can impact habitat, shellfish beds, and crab populations. He invited attendees to reach out to him at psean@uw.edu.

Q & A:

- Are there areas not being monitored? There are 55 monitoring sites, and they are not covering everything yet for a variety of reasons including capacity constraints. They are focused on having good coverage in top tier habitats, and use eDNA methods to streamline prioritization of habitat.
- What's going on in the rest of the Salish Sea? Colleagues are engaged in transboundary management plan, with nine governmental entities and First Nations participating. A SSEC session on this.
- Is there continued introduction from elsewhere? They are native to Europe and came to the East coast first. He doesn't believe that there is currently additional input, which would bring the input of new genetic material and potential for a much more rapid spread.
- Is eradication possible? They generally don't discuss this, since it is not possible to eliminate larvae.
- How do you prioritize sites? Look for the type of habitat they prefer, such as areas that retain water and isolated areas. Other considerations are whether the area is safe for volunteers, do we have volunteers, and is there access to the site.

Partner updates:

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin noted that the NWIFC provided a letter of support for the NW Straits Initiative's FY23 Congressionally Directed Spending application and support for reauthorization. She has been working with Dana and Lisa Kaufman to engage tribes in the voluntary no-



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anchor zone project, with some recent discussion about setting up a meeting to provide a briefing on the project.

Puget Sound Partnership: Jennifer Grimm shared that registration is open for Puget Sound Day on the Hill on May 11, 2-3pm. [Click here to register](#). The comment period for the Action Agenda has closed, and Partnership staff is now reviewing the comments.

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don Hunger noted that the Foundation is continuing to plan for AmeriCorps program, Salish Sea Conservation Corps to develop the next generation of marine conservationists. The program planning phase wraps up in July. A board member has contributed funding to develop an app for the Passport for Marine Adventure. MRCs will have an opportunity to share projects to include. Don introduced Mary Margaret Stoll, one of the recipients of the Caroline Gibson Scholarship, who is studying ocean acidification in the Salish Sea.

MRC Updates

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

Clallam –

- Continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Preparing for Port Angeles Earth Day Celebration (4/23) on the City Pier.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- Strategic Planning: Our members participated in a strategic planning retreat. The committee will continue to work out the details to finalize a plan at monthly meetings and subcommittee meetings.
- April Fool's Planting Event: The NW Straits Foundation, WA State Parks, and Sound Water Stewards partnered to add 20 yards of mulch and soil to the areas disturbed by the construction of a new dock. Additionally, over 200 shoreline plants were planted to work towards restoring the area to a more natural state.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The rain garden subcommittee organized a work party in Port Townsend on March 18th and addressed maintenance needs of three rain gardens (see photos below), and will be organizing another work party on April 29th.
- The MRC presented its annual update to the Board of Jefferson County Commissioners on March 28.
- The MRC executed a contract for side scan sonar surveys of lost crab pots in Discovery Bay (Adelma Beach and Cape George areas), to be scheduled sometime mid-May.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- Plans are ramping for summer projects; a summer intern has been found.
- Quarterly reporting was completed, and presentations created for the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference.
- The MRC approved the Annual Report.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert



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- MRC Project Planning Retreat: The MRC Project Planning Retreat was held virtually on April 13 and was facilitated by Lucas and Allie. MRC members evaluated and ranked the proposals prior to the retreat. The comments and questions raised by MRC members from the evaluations were addressed which led to some really great discussions about the projects.
- Fidalgo Bay Day: Fidalgo Bay Day will be held in person this year! The event date has been set for Saturday, August 20, 2022, 11am-3:00pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort in Anacortes. We are still working out the details, but it will be similar to past events with beach seining, a touch tank, bird watching, forage fish beach walks, interactive educational booths, games, face painting, kids crafts, and a no host salmon BBQ.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- Snohomish MRC wrapped up the Stakeholder Survey and follow up Stakeholder Interviews in March for the Port Susan Conservation Action Plan (CAP) Update Project. Overall, the results demonstrate strong commitment to the responsible management of the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area. Key takeaways include:
 - Many partners are not regularly utilizing the Port Susan MSA CAP.
 - Partners broadly supported shifting the focus towards implementation.
 - Some objectives and strategies would benefit from additional context and framing, particularly as they relate to climate change, wellbeing, and new considerations.
 - Most respondents chose options to cross walk the plan with PSP's Action Agenda and host biannual implementation meetings to make the plan more useful.
- Three new MRC members (Franchesca Perez, Allan Hicks, and Bob Margulis) recommended for appointment to the MRC were formally appointed by Snohomish County Council on March 30.
- MRC staff posted 4 vessels for removal from the Snohomish Estuary on March 28. Contractor bids are expected in late April, with the hope to start removing vessels in late May.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position and a Conservation/Environmental interest position. These vacancies are advertised on the MRC homepage <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org>
- Whatcom County Council and the Whatcom County Planning Commission will be discussing ways to increase public beach access in Whatcom County. Councilman Donavon has docketed the topic for future council agendas and has requested support from the Whatcom MRC.
- The Bellingham Community Boating Center (CBC) is offering more citizen science program and youth internship opportunities. There is interest in involving CBC participants in MRC field work.

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff will share as a separate document to MRC staff and the Commission:

- The NW Straits Commission approved Commission staff to move forward with contracting necessary for eelgrass protection zone expansion. This includes social marketing and site monitoring. Commission staff are working with MRCs to identify sites.
- Securing \$3 million in Congressionally Directed Spending is significant. MRCs should reach out to Lucas or Sasha if they anticipate needing more than \$200,000 for project work using these funds. It will be possible to provide funding in excess of this amount.



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- The Commission elected Elsa Schwartz and Tom Cowan for another term as Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively.
- Forage Fish training will be held July 13 in Port Townsend. Contact Leah Robison with questions Robison@nwstraits.org
- The NW Straits Commission Program Coordinator position is currently open for applicants. Information and application at <https://bit.ly/3lz1tXk>.
- Changes to the account that MRC State funds come from now require that half of the funds be spent by June 30, 2022, requiring MRC grant amendments. Sasha has reached out to MRC staff to initiate the process.
- P. Sean McDonald presented on green crab at the Commission meeting. E-DNA methods for crab detection are being developed. Information and resources at www.wsg.washington.edu/crabteam.
- Registration for virtual Puget Sound Day on the Hill on May 11 is open. [Click here to register.](#)
- The NW Straits Foundation is scoping development of a Salish Sea Conservation Corps program. They will be reaching out to MRCs on needs.
- The NW Straits Foundation is creating an app for their Passport to Marine Adventure project. The app will include georeferenced NW Straits Initiative projects and encourage people to visit. The Foundation will reach out to MRCs to gather information on projects they would like to highlight.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

*The next Commission meeting will be on Friday May 27, 2022, via Zoom.



Minutes

May 27, 2022 • 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Zoom – Virtual meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership alternate), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Julia Parrish, Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Christina Koons (San Juan), Chris Castner, Alan Clark (Clallam)
Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Dana Oster, Leah Robison, Jeff Whitty, Sasha Horst
Others in Attendance: Troy McKelvey (Jefferson MRC), Jackie Lindsey (COASST), Phil Salditt (NW Straits Foundation)
Absent: Nan McKay, Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Cecilia Gobin (Tribal)

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment. The Commission approved the minutes from the April 22 meeting as written by consensus.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom Cowan reported on the May 16 meeting of the committee, noting that the group focused on discussion of the budget for the Congressionally Directed Funds including approaches to address diversity, equity and inclusion, derelict vessels, and tribal projects.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia Parrish reported that the committee has spent time on extending invites to the *Speed Dating with Scientist* presentations for the next series of meetings.

External Relations Committee: Chris Castner **noted that he doesn't have an update on the reauthorization bill. He has reached out to Senator Murray's staff to find out the** current status of the draft bill. Lucas added that he talked to Padilla Bay Reserve Director Jude Apple, who was in Washington DC this week and noted that **Senator Murray's staff mentioned the** Northwest Straits Initiative reauthorization bill during his meeting with them.

Business items

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

- Staffing updates – Lucas reported that Nathan Woods will be joining us as Program Coordinator on June 6.
- Conference updates – Lucas shared the results of the one-question survey of MRC members about how comfortable they will be attending an in-person event. Following discussion, MRC representatives agreed to raise the discussion at their June meetings and report back to Commission staff. There was general support for an outdoor event in late summer.
- Congressional funding – Lucas informed the group that we are still waiting for NOAA to follow up with the process and guidance for the fiscal year 2022 federal funds and that staff will share more information when we receive it.
- Derelict vessel project opportunities – Commission staff recently held discussions with WA Dept of Natural Resources about derelict vessel removal and potentially a vessel turn in event. Lucas will reach out to MRCs to schedule a meeting on the program.
- Pew - Linking Kelp Science and Policy – Dana updated the group on a project funded by Pew. As part of the project, staff convened a workshop where more than 55 participants tuned in for a panel discussion around the existing rules and regulations that are in place to protect kelp, how they work in practice, and what information/resources are needed to inform decision-making.



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- Voluntary No-Anchor Zones – Dana reported that we are working with the NW Straits Foundation on permit applications and working with MRCs with local sites. The project team is also communicating with Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission for input from tribes.

Presenting Scientist – Jackie Lindsey

Julia Parrish introduced Jackie Lindsey of the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST). Jackie shared information about the beached bird program that has been going on for 22 years, and the marine debris program that has been going on for the last 8 years. The COASST program has already engaged with MRCs in several counties and Jackie shared her contact information and encouraged MRCs to reach out if there is interest in learning more or partnering by adopting a beach for dead bird surveys.

Partner updates:

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin was not in attendance.

Puget Sound Partnership: Jennifer Grimm updated the group on the Leadership Council considering adoption of final Action Agenda on June 8. Science Panel and ECB have recommended approval. Still trying to reschedule Puget Sound Day on the Hill and she will share information as soon as she has it.

Northwest Straits Foundation: Written report was provided in 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

- Summer interns are being sought. Deadline was extended and they now have applications pending.
- Tumwater Trap was installed 4/28.
- Continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- **Clallam MRC participated in Port Angeles' Earth Day Celebration (4/23) on the City Pier.** The event was attended and good weather helped, and they may have successfully recruited volunteers to monitor pigeon guillemots.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- Cornet Bay Stewardship – Weeding for Whales - Our restoration at Cornet Bay received some care on the 11th. We hosted a weeding and composting event. We will host another event on May 24 at 10 am to complete this work.
- Earth Day at the Clyde Theater - Island MRC and Sound Water Stewards partnered to host a showing of four of Florian Graner's amazing educational short films. Additionally, members of the MRC were able to host a Q&A session along with Florian to share about our program and how we have utilized Florian's amazing videos for school age education in Island County. 35 members of the public attended this fun event.
- Low Tide Walk - **The Island MRC and Sound Water Stewards partnered to host a Low tide walk at one of Whidbey's beautiful beaches.** 10 members of the public joined our team of beach naturalists to see what could be found at low tide. The highlight of the day was finding healthy adult Pisaster ochraceous sea stars!

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- Side scan sonar surveys took place May 16 & 17 covering a part of Port Townsend Bay (near the waterfront), as well as the Adelma Beach and Cape George (between the marina and Beckett Point) areas in Discovery Bay.



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- Olympia oyster subcommittee conducted an initial population survey at its new restoration site, south of the powerlines in South Discovery Bay, with the help of 7 volunteers.
- No-Anchor Zones team swapped the PT winter floats with summer spar buoys and did some maintenance work, bringing the number of functioning buoys up to 8 (of 13 permitted).

San Juan – Christina Koons

- Staff and MRC members presented at, and attended the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference
- MRC members reviewed and attended site visits for this year's Salmon Recovery project proposals.
- The MRC welcomed Ciera McQuaid as the summer intern.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- Salish Sea Stewards Training ends May 24. 24 trainees are slated to **graduate**. A **'bring your own lunch' picnic** is planned for July 16 at Padilla Bay where the newly graduated volunteers will get a chance to meet some of the veteran volunteers. The event will also include an educational component.
- Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Work Party- May 18: Skagit MRC in partnership with the Skagit Fisheries **Enhancement Group planted 10 Sitka spruce, 10 Douglas Fir and 20 Scouler's willow, plus dune grass at Bowman Bay**. They also installed 12 watering bags to help the trees stay moist during the dry season. This event coincided with the forage fish surveys. Trained volunteers conducted a survival assessment the following day.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- Snohomish MRC is currently planning for a series of three Stakeholder Meetings for the Port Susan Conservation Action Plan (CAP) Update Project. These meetings will focus directly on topics identified as high priorities by partners, including a meeting to focus on plan implementation and a meeting to discuss the Objectives & Strategic Actions of the CAP, with focus on areas identified by partners in need of updating, such as climate change, invasive species, and human, social, and cultural wellbeing. An introductory meeting will be held on May 25 to present the project to the Snohomish-Stillaguamish LIO, Island LIO, and other interested partners.
- Snohomish County is currently working to finalize a contract for the removal of 4 vessels from the Snohomish Estuary, with the hope to start removing vessels in late May.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position and a Conservation/Environmental interest position. These vacancies are advertised on the MRC homepage <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/>

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff will share as a separate document to MRC staff and the Commission:

- Action Item: MRC reps please ask your MRCs for insight on the following conference related matters and report general feedback to Sasha and Elsa. Given COVID:
 - How does the MRC feel about attending an in person indoor NW Straits Initiative conference in November?
 - How does the MRC feel about attending an outdoor NW Straits Initiative gathering in late summer/early fall instead of holding an in-person conference in November? The event would be more of an opportunity to connect than a conference.
- Lucas will be reaching out to MRC staff and other interested parties soon to schedule a meeting to discuss derelict vessels. In particular, we will discuss an opportunity to do a direct interagency agreement with DNR to remove vessels



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in MRC counties. Related to this, we will review the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Vessels of Concern list and the possibility of doing a pilot vessel turn-in event with DNR.

- The Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council will vote on approval of the new Action Agenda in June

Public comment

There was no public comment.

*The next Commission meeting will be on Friday June 24, 2022, via Zoom.



Minutes

June 24, 2022 10:00 AM-12:00PM
Zoom - Virtual meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Chris Castner, Phil Green (San Juan-alternate)

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Dana Oster, Leah Robison, Jeff Whitty, Nathan Woods, Sasha Horst, Allie Simpson, Antonio Jones

Others in Attendance: Troy McKelvey (Jefferson MRC), Phil Salditt (NW Straits Foundation), Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Jay Lind, Bob Margulis, Austin Rose (Whatcom), Frances Robertson (San Juan), Rebecca Mahan (Clallam)

Absent: Christina Koons (San Juan), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Julia Parrish, Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Cecilia Gobin (Tribal) Nan McKay, Alan Clark (Clallam)

Welcome and Introductions

Due to technical issues, Chair Elsa Schwartz joined the meeting late, so Vice Chair Tom Cowan opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment. The Commission approved the minutes from the May 27 meeting as written by consensus.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom Cowan reported on the June 13 Executive Committee meeting, noting that the group focused on discussion of the budget for the Congressionally Directed Funds including Marine Resource Committee's project proposals, approaches to address diversity, equity and inclusion, derelict vessels, and tribal projects. The Commission approved the budget for the Congressionally Directed Funds from NOAA by consensus.

Science Advisory Committee: Dana Oster shared an update from the Science Advisory Committees June meeting where the Committee reviewed an overview of the Voluntary No-Anchor Zone project and discussed possible eelgrass monitoring strategies to assess efficacy of this approach to eelgrass conservation. Dana also reported that the Science Advisory Committee is discussing how the current draft Articles of Association outline the role of the Science Advisory Committee and its support of the Northwest Straits Initiative.

External Relations Committee: Lucas reported that the Northwest Straits Commission is awaiting an update from Senator Murray's staff regarding the draft NW Straits Initiative reauthorization bill.

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- Welcome Nathan – Lucas introduced Nathan Woods to the Northwest Straits Commission. Nathan is excited to join the team as Program Coordinator.
- Kelp Plan Project/Program Inventory Survey – Jeff reported on the progress of the Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan Project/Program Inventory Survey that was sent out to kelp stakeholders throughout Puget Sound to gather information about what groups are involved in kelp conservation and restoration in the area, and to better understand what actions of the Kelp Plan are being undertaken. The survey is still active, and Jeff has asked for people to share the [kelp survey](#) link to anyone involved with kelp in Puget Sound. People have been asked to submit their responses by July 15, 2022.
- Conference update – Lucas reported on the feedback from MRCs on holding an in-person event in November. Based on that feedback, the recommendation is to hold an outdoor Collaborative Conservation Workshop on September 16 at Padilla Bay Reserve. Planning committee members met and discussed agenda items and created a tentative timeline for the event. The Commission approved the proposed Northwest Straits Collaborative Conservation Workshop by consensus.
- No-anchor zone funding update – Dana reported that the Commission was awarded \$66,874 in funding for the voluntary no-anchor zones project from US Fish and Wildlife Service. The funds will be used to support the program in 2023-2024. Around half of the award will be contracted to the Northwest Straits Foundation to carry out components of the project. Current work on the project includes a site selection process, finding independent contractors for diving operations, and completing permit applications.
- Pew kelp project update – Dana reported the first of two kelp workshops and focus groups occurred during May of this year, and the second is scheduled for August. The goal of this project is to bridge science, policy, and management practices to more effectively conserve kelp forests in Puget Sound.
- Veterans Conservation Corps – Allie welcomed back Antonio Jones to the Northwest Straits Commission as a full-time intern for his second summer season working on the European green crab trapping and removal program. In response to a question about how volunteers can engage in green crab efforts, Allie said MRCs should check with Washington Sea Grant about green crab monitoring by contacting [Emily Grayson](#) or visiting the [Washington Crab Team](#) or the [Washington Green Crab Map](#) website.
- Forage Fish training schedule update – Nathan reported on behalf of Leah that forage fish training is scheduled for July 13 in Port Townsend, with the virtual presentation on the July 12. Everyone who is signed up for the training event received an email from Leah with details, and interested parties can reach out to [Leah](#) with questions or concerns.

Congressional Funding Update

- Lucas reminded the group that preparations for this funding began six months ago and thanked MRCs for their help in the preliminary planning process. A final proposal will be submitted to



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NOAA by July 5 and is already routing at the Dept. of Ecology for review. After NOAA approval of the budget and workplan, the next steps will be to work with MRCs beginning in August to create grant agreements for the award to start in January of 2023.

- Lucas discussed the budget breakdown, including funding allocated to MRCs and funding for the WA Department of Natural Resources to conduct derelict vessel removal operations as prioritized by MRCs and tribal partners.
- The Northwest Straits Commission will work collaboratively with the Northwest Straits Foundation on several projects, including the voluntary no-anchor zones project and Clayton Beach restoration.
- Lucas also addressed the Northwest Straits Commission and MRCs desire to move forward with DEI assessment, and a new communications position that is planned to help support the work of MRCs and the Commission.

Partner updates

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin was not in attendance.

Puget Sound Partnership: Jennifer Grimm was not in attendance.

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don Hunger stated that a written report of the Northwest Straits Foundations current projects was provided in pre-meeting materials. Don noted that the Northwest Straits Foundation is recruiting two new board members for 2023. Don reported that the Northwest Straits Foundation's [Passport to Marine Adventure app](#) is live and available for download. The app connects the public to restoration work by providing incentives to the public, in the form of credits, for visiting restoration sites. The credits can be applied at participating businesses for discounts on purchases. Don Hunger encouraged MRCs to raise awareness of the app among their members and the public and contact him with any restoration sites that MRCs would like included in the app. Don also reported that three Caroline Gibson's Scholars scholarships have recently been granted to students.

MRC Updates

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

Clallam – Rebecca Mahan

- Summer intern interviews 6/13.
- Tumwater Trap is fishing.
- Continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Pigeon guillemot surveys have started.



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Island – Elsa Schwartz

- Cornet Bay Stewardship – Weeding for Whales. The MRCs restoration at Cornet Bay received some additional care on May 24th and June 10th. There are a lot of weeds to remove. The MRC will be holding another event on July 8th to start spreading 40 yards of hog fuel to help smother the weeds and provide a moisture barrier for the plants and trees.
- Marine Debris/ Plastics Classes with the Swinomish. In collaboration with the Sound Water Stewards, the MRC was honored to assist in teaching a couple of classes for Swinomish youth called “Between Two Worlds.” This program helps students learn about science from a western and indigenous perspective.
- Oak Harbor AP BIO Class – Marine Debris Survey. The final weeks of the school year, the MRC were worked with the 12th grade AP Biology students from Oak Harbor to set up an initial marine debris survey site at Fort Casey State Park. The site will then be monitored by students in the future. This is in collaboration with WA State Parks, Sound Water Stewards and NOAA.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC tabled its first in-person community event since the pandemic started, at Shrimpfest in Brinnon on May 28 and 29. We made 266 direct contacts over the weekend and had lots of positive interactions and public members (local and visiting) particularly interested in the green crab invasion (the first one in Hood Canal was detected just the week prior).
- The first ROV survey to locate and remove derelict crab pots from the Cape George and Adelma Beach areas of Discovery Bay was conducted on June 14. The team faced a number of challenges (strong currents, low visibility, fishing line and seaweed plugging up the ROV propellers, etc.) and was unable to locate pots. With some lessons learned and ideas for improving the ROV setup, the team will continue to pilot this effort.
- The MRC had an Olympia oyster workday on June 17, with 5 MRC members and 5 community volunteers helping to spread shell (16 half barrels) at the Lagoon Site.

San Juan – Phil Green

- Vessel monitoring efforts at eelgrass protection sites around the county began for the season. MRC staff and an MRC member began visitor assessments at False Bay, they are trying to recruit more members to help with this effort.
- County staffing of the MRC is undergoing restructuring to make better use of staff time and skill sets.

Skagit – Jay Lind attended on behalf of Skagit MRC.

- Olympia oyster cultch bags recently collected by volunteers indicated that 2021 had the second highest rate of oyster settlement recorded in Fidalgo Bay!



Minutes

- Surf smelt spawning activity is really starting to ramp up now after a quiet winter.
- Kelp monitoring is now underway. The first surveys of the season took place at our 3 survey sites on June 3, June 12, and June 25. Five new kayaker volunteers are helping with the surveys this year.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- Snohomish MRC hosted an introductory stakeholder meeting on May 25 for the Port Susan Conservation Action Plan (CAP) Update Project to present the project to the Snohomish-Stillaguamish Local Integrating Organization (LIO), Island LIO, and other interested partners. The MRC is currently planning for two additional stakeholder meetings, which will focus directly on topics identified as high priorities by partners, including a meeting to focus on plan implementation and a meeting to discuss the Objectives & Strategic Actions of the CAP, with focus on areas identified by partners as in need of updating, such as climate change, invasive species, and human, social, and cultural wellbeing.
- Snohomish County's contractor is planning to begin removing the first of four derelict vessels from the Snohomish Estuary the week of June 27, starting with the vessel on Jetty Island.
- The Crabber Education subcommittee is planning to coordinate in-person outreach at the 10th Street Boat Launch in Everett on July 1, 2, 8, and 9, pending final details about opening day from WDFW. Depending on volunteer interest, in-person outreach may expand to additional sites.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position interest position. This vacancy is advertised on the MRC homepage <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/>
- The MRCs Beach Seine with Schools program was highlighted in the [Cascadia Daily News](#).

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff will share as a separate document to MRC staff and the Commission:

- **Save the date:** In lieu of the November conference, Northwest Straits will hold an outdoor in-person Collaborative Conservation Workshop on Friday September 16 from 11am-4pm at Padilla Bay Reserve. All MRC members and staff, NW Straits Commission staff and Commissioners, NW Straits Foundation Board and staff are invited and encouraged to attend. A schedule and timeline of events is in development. Additional information and registration details will be sent directly to all MRC members.
- **Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS):** NW Straits Commission staff submitted the budget and project outlines for the 2022 Congressional funds. The planned timeline for the funds is January 1, 2023-December 31, 2023. The timeline and workplan are awaiting approval from NOAA.



Minutes

- **Passport to Marine Adventure:** The NW Straits Foundation's [Passport to Marine Adventure app](#) is live and available for download. The app connects the public to restoration work by providing incentives to the public, in the form of credits, for visiting restoration sites. The credits can be applied at participating businesses for discounts on purchases. Don Hunger encouraged MRCs to raise awareness of the app among their members and the public and contact him with any restoration sites that MRCs would like included in the app.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

July 29, 2022 - The next Northwest Straits Commission meeting: 10am-12pm via Zoom. More information can be found [on our website](#).



Minutes

July 29, 2022 10:00 AM-12:00PM
Zoom - Virtual meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Nan McKay, Chris Castner, Julia Parrish, Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Christina Koons (San Juan), Cecilia Gobin (Tribal)

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Dana Oster, Jeff Whitty, Nathan Woods, Allie Simpson, Antonio Jones

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Austin Rose (Whatcom), Barbara Bennett (Island)

Absent: Alan Clark (Clallam), Dianne Hennebert (Skagit), Laura Blackmore

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment. The Commission approved the minutes from the June 24 meeting as written by consensus.

Remembering Terry Williams

The Commission noted the passing of Terry Williams, one of the founding members of the NW Straits Initiative and a tribal leader. Terry was instrumental in establishing the Initiative's strong tribal partnerships, and he made significant contributions to conservation locally, nationally, and internationally. Read an article in the Everett Herald about Terry [here](#).

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom Cowan reported that there was no Executive Committee meeting this month and as a result, there is nothing to report.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia Parrish reported that the Science Advisory Committee has been working on creating terms of reference and long term guidelines for what the Science Advisory Committee is and what they do. Julia predicts better involvement in the future following the completion of the guidelines.

External Relations Committee: Chris Castner reported the External Relations Committee is scheduled to meet soon, after a several month hiatus. The committee plans to discuss the NW Straits Initiative reauthorization bill that Senator Murray's staff shared with the Governor's office and the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. Chris also noted that the Northwest Straits request for Congressionally Directed



Minutes

Spending for fiscal year 2023 made it into the Senate appropriations bill. Senator Murray was invited to attend the Collaborative Conservation Workshop on September 16 but has not confirmed.

Business items

- Forage fish training report out - Nathan reported on behalf of Leah that WA Department of Fish and Wildlife, with the support of their Washington Conservation Corps crew, provided training to over 20 volunteers on how to conduct the forage fish spawn beach surveys. Volunteers were able to get hands-on practice collecting samples on the beach at the NW Maritime Center.
- Green crab catch update – Jeff reported Commission staff prepared and submitted the interim report required for the WA Department of Fish and Wildlife green crab funding. Commission staff also met with staff from DNR, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife, WA Sea Grant, and Padilla Bay Reserve to discuss a collaborative effort to trap green crab in Fidalgo Bay. Commission staff are also planning collaborative trapping events with the Upper Skagit Tribe south of Larrabee State Park, and with the NW Straits Foundation at Larrabee State Park.
- Salish Sea eelgrass no-anchor zone meeting update – Allie reported that an eelgrass survey of North Chuckanut Bay is planned for this summer. Commission staff hosted a transboundary Salish Sea Eelgrass Protection Zone meeting with partners in WA and BC to coordinate on shared approaches and messaging for the voluntary no-anchor zones.
- Collaborative Conservation Workshop –Nathan reported that Commission staff are working on logistics and the planning group will share an agenda soon. Registration for the event is still open, please register if you have not done so already. The event is scheduled for September 16, from 11am-4pm at the Padilla Bay Reserve.
- Congressional funding update - Lucas reported Commission staff are awaiting feedback from NOAA on the application for fiscal year 2022 Congressional funds, which includes project proposals prioritized by MRCs. Funds are anticipated to begin January 1, 2023.

Partner updates

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin reported the NW Indian Fisheries Commission is working with tribes to compose a list of derelict vessels they would like to prioritize for removal through the NW Straits Commission derelict vessel removal project being planned with 2022 Congressional funds. Cecilia also said they are finalizing a review of the NW Straits Initiative reauthorization bill and she believes the NW Indian Fisheries Commission will support it, with a few recommendations for changes in word choice.

Puget Sound Partnership: No report from the Partnership.

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don Hunger reported the NW Straits Foundation is recruiting for new board members. Don also stated there is strong support for the Salish Sea Conservation Corps program they are developing. Next year is the pilot year for the program and they intend to build structure for it as a formal



Minutes

AmeriCorps program in support of the NW Straits Initiative. Don wants the program to maintain flexibility to support marine conservation in diverse ways year-round.

MRC Updates

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

Clallam

- Continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Pigeon Guillemot surveys are in full swing.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- Cornet Bay Stewardship event took place on July 8.
- Bull kelp surveys began mid-June and will continue through to the fall.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- Sea Dragons team continues with ROV surveys. Jefferson MRC hopes to continue to work with the Sea Dragons to locate and recover derelict crab pots in East Jefferson County.
- Jefferson MRC partnered with Port Townsend Marine Science Center and co-hosted a virtual panel on Dungeness crab research and management efforts featuring Emily Buckner from Puget Sound Restoration Fund and Pacific Crab Research Group, Liz Tobin with the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe and Katelyn Bosley of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Jefferson MRC tabled the Forever Streamfest event in Port Angeles on June 25.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- New Marine Program staffing structure has been implemented by San Juan MRC, which is designed to make better use of staff time and skill sets.
- 45 visitor assessments completed at False Bay and Ulva Sp. sampling is now well underway.

Skagit

- Salish Sea Stewards picnic was held at Padilla Bay on Saturday, July 16.
- Forage fish survey volunteers hosted an educational forage fish survey station at the Fidalgo Bay Resort for several small groups of Latinx kids from the Washington State's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program (GEAR UP).

Snohomish – Tim Ellis



Minutes

- Stakeholder meetings for the Port Susan Conservation Action Plan (CAP) Update Project on June 30 and July 6. These meetings focused on plan implementation and discussing the Objectives & Strategic Actions of the CAP with focus on areas such as climate change, invasive species, and human, social, and cultural wellbeing.
- Derelict vessel contractor has removed two derelict vessels from the Snohomish Estuary.
- Crabber Education subcommittee conducted in-person outreach at the 10th Street Boat Launch in Everett on July 1, 2, 8, and 9.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- Whatcom MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position.
- SW Lummi Island Beach Cleanup successfully removed 452lbs of trash from the beach.

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff will share as a separate document to MRC staff and the Commission:

- **Northwest Straits Initiative Collaborative Conservation Workshop** will be held at Padilla Bay Reserve September 16; from 11 AM to 4 PM. The event is planned for MRC members, MRC Staff, NWS Commission Board and Staff, and NWS Foundation Board and staff. Registration for the event is still open, MRC members and staff should have received a direct email invite. Please register by August 8, if you have not done so already. Contact [Nathan Woods](#) with questions.
- **Derelict Vessel Removal:** NW Straits Commission staff are working with WA Department of Natural Resources, tribal partners, and MRCs to plan derelict vessel removals and pilot a derelict vessel turn-in event using Congressionally Directed Funds. MRC members interested in joining the project workgroup should reach out to Lucas Hart.
- **San Juan MRC:** San Juan County recently restructured staffing to better coordinate staff support for the Marine Resources Committee, the Citizen Advisory Group for Salmon Recovery, and the Local Integrating Organization.
- **Terry Williams:** The Commission noted the passing of Terry Williams, one of the founding members of the NW Straits Initiative and a tribal leader. Terry was instrumental in establishing the Initiative's strong tribal partnerships, and he made significant contributions to conservation locally, nationally, and internationally. Read an article in the Everett Herald about Terry [here](#).

Public comment

There was no public comment.



Minutes

August 26, 2022 - The next Northwest Straits Commission meeting: 10am-12pm via Zoom. More information can be found [on our website](#).



Minutes

August 26, 2022 10:00 AM-12:00PM
Zoom - Virtual meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Chris Castner, Julia Parrish, Alan Clark (Clallam), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Christina Koons (San Juan), Dianne Hennebert (Skagit), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Bob Cecile (Whatcom)

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Dana Oster, Allie Simpson, Jeff Whitty, Nathan Woods

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Chris Mantegna, Troy McKelvey (Jefferson), Karin Roemers-Kleven (San Juan), Austin Rose (Whatcom)

Absent: Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Laura Blackmore, Nan McKay, Tom Cowan (Vice Chair)

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment. The Commission approved the minutes from the July 29 meeting as written by consensus.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Lucas Hart reported for the Executive Committee. The Committee recommended approval of the proposed 2023 Commission meeting schedule and addition of an October 28, 2022 Commission meeting date. Senator Murray continues to lead on the NW Straits Initiative reauthorization bill. The Senator's staff is working with the Senate Commerce Committee to introduce the legislation in the next session.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia Parrish reported the Science Advisory Committee continues to recruit speakers for Speed Dating with Scientists.

External Relations Committee: Chris Castner reported that Senator Murray's staff are in frequent communication about progress on the NW Straits reauthorization bill. Senator Lovelett will speak at the Collaborative Conservation Workshop. Lucas extended an invitation to Senator Murray to speak at the Collaborative Conservation Workshop, but her schedule is pending.

Business items

- FY22 Congressionally Directed Spending update – Sasha reported that Commission staff distributed a memo, timeline, and project forms for the NW Straits Congressionally Directed Spending to MRCs for one-time funding for 2023. Those agreements will begin January 1, 2023.
- Green Crab update – Jeff reported that fieldwork continues for green crab removal in both Drayton Harbor and Samish Bay. The Washington Conservation Corps crew is finishing their last week trapping on August 25. Jeff and Leah continue to recruit volunteers to help with trapping and outreach. NW Straits Commission staff collaborated with Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, NW Straits Foundation, and Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC) to sample Clayton Beach and neighboring Upper Skagit areas. Additionally, NW Straits Commission staff collaborated with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources, Samish Indian Nation, VCC, Puget Sound Corps, Washington Sea Grant, and Padilla Bay Reserve to conduct a green crab-sampling blitz in Fidalgo Bay.
- Derelict vessel removal planning – Lucas reported NW Straits Commission staff held a meeting with the Department of Natural Resources and tribal partners to strategize on options for removing derelict vessels from tribally owned tidelands.
- Collaborative Conservation Workshop September 16 update – Nathan reported that Senator Lovelett has agreed to speak at the September 16 Collaborative Conservation Workshop. Workshop registrants will receive an email soon that will include the workshop agenda and details about the event, including how to complete the required health screening.

Yellow Island Intertidal Monitoring Project: Chris Mantegna presented to the Northwest Straits Commission. Chris developed this project, with funding from the Doris Duke Conservation Scholar Program, to create opportunities for underserved groups to engage in conservation. Students from various disciplines monitored Yellow Island by cataloging presence and abundance of observed species. Chris hopes to increase the scale and involve other partner organizations in similar student driven monitoring efforts in the future. Learn more about the program [here](#), or find contact information on Chris and other presenters in the Speed Dating with Scientists series [here](#).

Partner updates

Puget Sound Partnership: No report from the Partnership

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don Hunger reported the NW Straits Foundation staff met with an engineers and contractors at Hoypus Point to discuss restoration work scheduled to start in October. Boeing gave the NW Straits Foundation a \$50,000 grant to fund restoration work at new sites. Don extended an invitation to Commission meeting attendees for the Caroline Gibson Scholars event on September 23, 4-6pm at the Northwest Maritime Center 431 Water Street Port Townsend, WA 98368. Register for the event [here](#).

MRC Updates

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

Clallam – Alan Clark

- Freshwater Bay kayak survey took place July 31.
- Forage Fish sampling continues monthly at Cline Spit and Ediz Hook and Elwha beaches East and West.
- Clallam MRC member Bob Vreeland and volunteer Coleman Byrnes sampling Freshwater Bay and Pillar Point for shellfish Biotoxin on a monthly basis.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- Cornet Bay Stewardship Weeding for Whales event was August 6.
- Atlantis Steam ROV Camp occurred at Coupeville Wharf July 29.

Jefferson – Troy McKelvey

- The MRC organized two rain garden work parties on July 29 and August 17, engaging two MRC members and eleven community volunteers, and will be installing a new rain garden next month.
- The MRC contracted an eelgrass survey along the Port Townsend waterfront, which took place the week of July 25.
- The MRC supported the local PT Maritime Discovery Schools Teacher Training program, providing presentations to teachers from Jefferson and Clallam counties on the nearshore ecosystem (what it is, local issues, and restoration and caretaking efforts) as well as the MRCs Olympia oyster restoration work.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- San Juan MRC held successful elections of MRC Chair, Vice-chair, and NW Straits Commission representative and alternate.
- Sinking of Aleutian Isle continues to be of critical concern and MRC is providing support as called upon.
- Projects such as visitor surveys and *Ulva* sampling at False Bay, and vessel surveys throughout the county, are on target.

Skagit – Dianne Hennebert

- The final Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance work party took place August 8. Over 18 volunteers participated including eight or nine volunteers from Crane Aerospace and several new and veteran Salish Sea Stewards. Plant maintenance included weeding, watering, and spreading 7 cubic yards of bark with buckets.
- Fidalgo Bay Day occurred Saturday, August 20 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. More to report next month.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- Snohomish MRC is currently reviewing the draft of the Port Susan Phase 1 final report completed by ESA. Staff will meet on August 18 to discuss the draft before completing a final report in early September.
- The Meadowdale Monitoring Plan is now complete. Next steps include the creation of a Meadowdale Monitoring webpage to host on the MRC website, and the creation of a story map.

- The MRC is hosting a beach cleanup at Picnic Point Park on September 24 in partnership with WSU Snohomish County Beach Watchers and Zero Waste Washington.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- The MRC has a vacancy for an economic interest position. This vacancy is advertised on the MRC homepage <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/>

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff will share as a separate document to MRC staff and the Commission:

- **Northwest Straits Commission meeting schedule:** The Commission approved the remaining 2022 dates and the 2023 schedule. See attached schedule for details.
- **Derelict Vessel Removal:** MRCs and tribal partners are compiling prioritization lists for derelict vessel removal to distribute to NW Straits Commission staff. Contact your MRC Coordinator or Lucas Hart (hart@nwstraits.org) for more information.
- **Northwest Straits Initiative Collaborative Conservation Workshop:** Senator Lovelett agreed to speak at the Sept. 16 Collaborative Conservation Workshop. Workshop registrants – watch for an email that will include the workshop agenda and details about the event, including how to complete the required health screening.
- **Congressionally Directed Spending:** NOAA awarded Congressionally Directed Spending for the Northwest Straits Commission for 2023. Funding becomes available January 1 – December 31, 2023. Northwest Straits Commission staff provided instructions for project applications to MRC coordinators.
- **Yellow Island Intertidal Monitoring Project:** Chris Mantegna presented to the Northwest Straits Commission. Chris developed this project, with funding from the Doris Duke Conservation Scholar Program, to create opportunities for underserved groups to engage in conservation. Students from various disciplines monitored Yellow Island by cataloging presence and abundance of observed species. Chris hopes to increase the scale and involve other partner organizations in similar student driven monitoring efforts in the future. Learn more about the program [here](#), or find contact information on Chris and other presenters in the Speed Dating with Scientists series [here](#).
- **Northwest Straits Initiative Reauthorization:** Senator Murray continues to lead the effort for a federal reauthorization of the NW Straits Initiative. Preliminary plans indicate the bill may be introduced in the US Senate after the August recess.

Public comment

Elsa Schwartz invited people to attend the 2022 Coastal and Estuarine Summit, Dec 4-8 in New Orleans. Register [here](#). Early bird registration through Oct 7. The Summit brings together the coastal restoration and management communities to explore issues, solutions, and lessons learned in their work. The Summit Program will address all aspects of coastal and estuarine restoration and management.

September 30, 2022 - The next Northwest Straits Commission meeting: 10am-12pm via Zoom. Find more information [on our website](#).



Minutes

September 30, 2022 - 10:00 AM-12:00PM

Zoom - Virtual meeting

Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Chris Castner, Julia Parrish, Dianne Hennebert (Skagit), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Nan McKay, Karin Roemers-Kleven (San Juan-alternate), Alan Clark (Clallam), Jennifer Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership), Mike MacKay (Whatcom – alternate)

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

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Phil Salditt (NW Straits Foundation), Austin Rose (Whatcom), Scott Pearson (WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife)

Absent: Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Christina Koons (San Juan), Tom Cowan, Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Laura Blackmore

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgment and introductions of attendees. The Commission approved the minutes from the August 26 meeting as written by consensus.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Lucas noted that the approved 2023 Commission meeting schedule did not include a retreat. The Commission approved by consensus to cancel the March 31 meeting in favor of a two-day retreat. Commission staff will identify potential retreat dates to confirm with the Commission at a later meeting. The Executive Committee recommended adoption of the Science Advisory Committee's draft Articles of Association, which the Commission approved by consensus. Lucas also reported that he is working with Department of Ecology staff to revise the language on the state funding proviso for the 2023-25 biennium.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia Parrish thanked the Commission for approving the Committee's Articles of Association. She plans to work on scheduling meetings, which will be less frequent but more pointed, as well as adding depth to the current membership. She also noted that the members of the Committee who were able to attend the Collaborative Conservation Workshop gave positive feedback on the event.

External Relations Committee: Chris Castner reported that Senator Murray introduced the Northwest Straits Initiative reauthorization bill ([S4903](#)), which was referred to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. He will share updates on the bill activities as action happens and asked the members of the Commission to consider and share ideas on what outreach they might want to do on the bill once it passes.

Business items

- Collaborative Conservation Workshop – Sasha shared a summary of the evaluations submitted by participants at the September 16 event. Overall, there was a positive response, and staff will work on following up on any action items recommended.
- Green crab update – Jeff shared an update on the green crab trapping season to date, including a late season surge in the number of crabs caught predominantly due to the appearance of small (juvenile) crabs, many of which were caught in saline tidally-influenced regions of creeks. Members of the Commission had a variety of questions related to activities, what is known and not known about the population, as well as the Commission’s role and next steps.
- Staffing update – Lucas reported that the Program Coordinator position is vacant and will be posted soon, along with a Communications Consultant position.
- Derelict vessel turn-in event planning – Lucas updated the Commission on the discussions around derelict vessels. Interested MRC and tribal representatives will be forming a prioritization workgroup in October, and planning is underway with WA Dept of Natural Resources on derelict vessel removal as well as a pilot derelict vessel turn in event.

Monitoring Washington’s marine wildlife by air, water, and land: Scott Pearson from WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife shared a presentation on surveying Washington’s seabirds and marine mammals. He noted that they work closely in partnership with other agencies and entities. The reasons for monitoring include understanding population status, trends, and distribution; ecosystem impacts; impact of human activities; and emerging issues. The causes of declines, effectiveness of conservation actions, the importance of specific places, and the impacts of one species on another are all of interest to the state.

Data collected on marine birds and mammals can be explored online at <https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/wp/MarineSeabird/index.html>, or data on winter seabirds at <https://gispublic.dfw.wa.gov/WinterSeabird/>.

Partner updates

NW Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin shared an update on the derelict vessel partnership between the NW Straits Commission and interested tribes. She noted that there is a lot of interest, but also some capacity and liability issues to resolve.

Cecilia also reported that tribal leaders will be travelling to Washington, DC to meet with headquarter officials about key habitat issues and asks that Tribes have asked for, and continue to ask for, through the Treaty Rights at Risk Forum. The trip is expected to occur in November.

Puget Sound Partnership: Jennifer Grimm updated on staffing for the Partnership, with Ahren Stroming joining as the Special Assistant for Federal Affairs, who will serve as Laura Blackmore's alternate for Commission meetings in the future. Jenn also noted that there is a Request for Proposals out from the Strategic Initiative Leads. Those are available at <https://pugetsoundestuary.wa.gov/rfp/>.

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don reported that the Foundation board recently approved their annual budget, which includes piloting the Salish Sea Corps in 2023, stewardship activities, continuation of the Caroline Gibson scholarships, strengthening outreach, and highlighting the work of MRCs through the Passport to Marine Adventure app.

MRC Updates

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

Clallam – Alan Clark

- MRC volunteers continued monthly Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Monthly shellfish biotoxins sampling at Pillar Point and Freshwater Bay.
- Four MRC Members and Coordinator attended NW Straits Collaborative Conservation Workshop in Padilla Bay 9/16/22.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- MRC Volunteer Appreciation Gathering: We hosted a volunteer appreciation gathering this month. Our MRC realizes our work would not be possible without the amazing, dedicated volunteers who conduct research, provide education, and steward our restoration sites.
- MRC Picnic
- Family Outdoor Day: We hosted an educational booth at the Family Outdoor Day at Fort Casey State Park. The event attracted around 200 children.

Jefferson – Troy McKelvey

- Eight MRC members helped to table the Wooden Boat Festival on September 9-11 in Port Townsend, reaching 353 direct contacts, and acquiring 16 new sign-ups for notification of MRC meetings and/or volunteer opportunities.
- The MRC is prepping for a new rain garden installation on September 28 behind the WSU Extension office building in Port Hadlock, to treat stormwater flowing into South Port Townsend Bay.
- The MRC is working with the Sea Dragons to create education outreach materials, including a StoryMap and website project page detailing the ROV derelict crab pot removal efforts (including results from the side scan sonar surveys).

San Juan – Karin Roemers-Kleven

- First in-person monthly meeting in 2+ years proved fruitful and was much appreciated
- Sinking of Aleutian Isle continues to be of critical concern and MRC held a subcommittee meeting to discuss merits of a town forum.

- All summer projects are wrapping up and data currently being summarized for Q4 reporting

Skagit – Dianne Hennebert

- Fidalgo Bay Day was held Saturday, August 20th at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Thanks to the 36 organizations and 155 volunteers who helped make this year's in-person event a huge success! An estimated 400 people attended. The opening ceremony was led by MRC member Jay Lind and Samish tribal member Rosie Cayou James. The event offered a wide variety of indoor and outdoor educational booths and activities including a beach seining demonstration, a touch tank, a whale skull, microscopes, games, kids' crafts, and face painting. 175 attendees participated in the Discovery Passport activity and 35 kids competed in the coloring contest to win a spot on the cover of next year's Discovery Passport. Food included popcorn, a chowder competition from 3 local restaurants, complimentary samples of grilled shellfish, and a no-host traditional Samish salmon BBQ lunch. There were two newspaper articles about the event.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- Snohomish County's derelict vessel contractor has removed all 4 of the derelict vessels that were contracted for removal in 2022. Snohomish County is processing the invoices and then will seek reimbursement from DNR. DNR's new legislation allows for 100% reimbursement, up from the 90% previously available.
- The Meadowdale BNSF railway bridges were installed earlier in September. Work on the estuary continues through October 15. Elisa is working with consultant ESA on the Meadowdale Monitoring webpage which will be hosted on the MRC webpage, and the creation of a story map.
- The MRC is hosting a beach cleanup at Picnic Point Park on September 24th in partnership with WSU Snohomish County Beach Watchers and Zero Waste Washington

Whatcom –

- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position interest position. This vacancy is advertised on the MRC homepage <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/>
- A solicitation for the 2022/2023 forage fish intern closed on September 9. 8 applications were received. Applications are currently under review and a candidate will be chosen by September 23.
- The MRC will vote on a new agenda item titled "Community Update" to replace the Public Comment Period in order to no longer be subject to the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA).

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff will share as a separate document to MRC staff and the Commission:

- **Northwest Straits Initiative Reauthorization:** The Northwest Straits Initiative reauthorization bill was introduced in the Senate ([S4903](#)) by Senator Murray. It was referred to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee.
- **Monitoring Washington's marine wildlife by air, water, and land:** Scott Pearson from WA Department of Fish and Wildlife gave an overview of how they monitor seabirds and marine

mammals, in partnership with other agencies and entities. To explore data collected, go to <https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/wp/MarineSeabird/index.html>

- **Green crab:** Commission staff shared a late season update on green crab trapping, noting a surge in the number of crabs caught.
- **Derelict vessels:** Lucas updated the Commission on planning efforts for the derelict vessel removal and the pilot derelict vessel turn in event. A workgroup will be formed in October made up of interested MRC and tribal representatives. The workgroup will guide prioritization of vessel removals in 2023.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

October 28, 2022 - Northwest Straits Commission meeting: 10am-12pm via Zoom. Find more information [on our website](#).



Minutes

October 28, 2022 - 10:00 AM-12:00PM
Zoom - Virtual meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Chris Castner, Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Alan Clark (Clallam), Ahren Stroming (Puget Sound Partnership-alternate), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Christina Koons (San Juan), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Barbara Bennett (Island – Alternate), Nan McKay

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

Others in Attendance: Jan Newton, Julie Schlenger (Snohomish MRC), Brooke Friesen (NWS Foundation), Bob Margulis (Snohomish MRC), Mike McKay (Whatcom MRC), Sarah Fiskin (Jefferson MRC), Austin Rose (Whatcom)

Absent: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Laura Blackmore, Julia Parrish, Cecilia Gobin

Welcome and Introductions

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

Tom introduced Representative Debra Lekanoff, state representative for the 40th district, and welcomed her to the meeting and thanked her for joining the Commission meeting.

Representative Debra Lekanoff provided opening remarks for the meeting and thanked the Commission and MRCs for work on derelict gear, derelict vessels, green crab and other projects.

She shared information on some of the important issues coming up in the next state legislative session, such as investments in clean water and habitat and discussed some of the issues surrounding net ecological gain, which was a centerpiece of [HR 1117](#), a bill Rep. Lekanoff sponsored in the last biennial session.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom Cowan noted that there was no Executive Committee meeting this month.

Science Advisory Committee: Dana reported that the committee is working on taking the articles of association that were adopted by the Commission and mapping out a plan for putting them into action for 2023, including plans for recruiting and identifying the areas of expertise that would align with planned MRC projects.

External Relations Committee: Chris Castner reported that there is no new news on the reauthorization bill ([S4903](#)). It was introduced and referred to committee, but there has been no further action. He is tracking closely and will report any action.

Business items

- Commission staff shared the updated [2023 meeting dates](#), which includes an in-person conference and retreat, as well as some tentative locations for in-person meetings during the year.
- Pew kelp grant – Dana reported on progress on the Pew Charitable Trusts funding that the Commission has to support linking science and policy related to kelp. She has been leading the project by holding conversations and workshops to assess how we review projects and potential impacts to kelp, then synthesizing those discussions to identify challenges and recommendations for multiagency guidance to support improved implementation of existing rules and regulations to protect kelp.
- Derelict vessels – Dana thanked the MRCs and tribal partners for submitting vessel lists for prioritization. She is in the process of forming a workgroup that will meet to prioritize the vessel list. She anticipates scheduling a November meeting and potentially another meeting in January. She encouraged Commissioners to reach out to her if interested in learning more.

Backyard Buoys Project

Jan Newton is a senior principal oceanographer with the Applied Physics Laboratory of the University of Washington and affiliate professor in both the UW School of Oceanography and the School of Marine and Environmental Affairs. She presented to the Commission on the Backyard Buoys Project, which is a program designed to provide community-driven stewardship of lower cost technologies to provide real time wave data. Information about the project is available at www.backyardbuoys.org/.

She also gave a quick overview of the Northwest Association of Networked Ocean Observing Systems. More information: <http://www.nanoos.org/>.

Partner updates

Puget Sound Partnership: Ahren Stroming attended and introduced himself as the Special Assistant for Federal Affairs, who will serve as Laura Blackmore’s alternate for Commission meetings in the future. Ahren has been with the Partnership for the last three years and is looking forward to serving as a valuable partner for the Commission. Ahren shared three recent updates from the Partnership:

- The partnership has released their 2023-25 biennial budget rankings, a prioritized list of state agency 2023-2025 budget requests related to Puget Sound recovery. The document can be found here: <https://pspwa.box.com/s/owm36i5u0upo7m7km1t14dsreb7vajxb>.
- The Habitat, Shellfish, and Stormwater Strategic Initiative Lead Requests for Proposals are now open. These provide grants to subrecipients that accelerate Puget Sound Recovery. The RFPs can be found here: <https://pugetsoundestuary.wa.gov/rfp/>.

- The [PUGET SOS bill](#), which would establish national Puget Sound office at EPA, was incorporated into the WRDA bill (Water Resources Development Act). The bill is expected to pass via vote next month, and they are tracking that closely.

The Commission moved and approved by consensus that Ahren Stroming serve as the Puget Sound Partnership alternate.

Northwest Straits Foundation: Provided a written update.

MRC Updates

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

Clallam – Alan Clark

- MRC volunteers continued monthly forage fish sampling on three beaches.
- Monthly shellfish biotoxins sampling at Pillar Point and Freshwater Bay. Both beaches have been closed due to high toxin levels.

Island – Barbara Bennett

- Orca Recovery Day at Cornet and Hoypus Point.
- Camano Library Presentation – Shore Friendly Practices
- Hoypus Point Drone Footage and Educational Video

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC, with the help of 15 volunteers and 3 staff, installed a new rain garden on Sep 28 behind the WSU Extension office building in Port Hadlock, to treat stormwater flowing into South Port Townsend Bay. Going forward, this rain garden will also serve as an educational site for teaching about stormwater issues.
- The MRC will host its last rain garden work party of the year on Oct 28, to weed, replant, and mulch some of the established rain gardens in Port Townsend.
- On Oct 7, the MRC began its seventh year of monitoring forage fish spawning at Fort Townsend State Park.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- Eight boats in Blind Bay (Lopez Island) and West Sound (Orcas Island) were tagged during a derelict vessel patrol on Sept 23rd; illegal mooring buoys were also surveyed and mapped
- Great Islands Clean-up (Sept 24th) was a great success with more 180 volunteers collecting in excess of 1,700 pounds of trash
- Excellent presentation at October MRC meeting (Oct 6th) by Chris Mantegna, sharing results of 2022 intertidal monitoring project on Yellow Island

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- Bowman Bay Planting Party- November 3, 2022 (9am-12pm): Additional plants for the Bowman Bay restoration site were purchased with leftover funding. Skagit MRC is co-hosting a planting party with the Northwest Straits Foundation on November 3 from 9am to 12pm. We are asking volunteers to RSVP and to provide their own garden tools and gloves.
- Kids on the Beach: New this fall we have a modified version of Kids on the Beach involving high school students. The first field program was held October 5th with Concrete High School Students collecting mudflat exploration data at Bay View State Park. The Kids on the Beach field day with Conway Middle School was supposed to be held on October 19th at the Fidalgo RV Park but was postponed due to poor air quality from wildfire smoke. We plan to reschedule.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The Snohomish MRC partnered with Zero Waste Washington and WSU Beach Watchers to host a Beach Cleanup on September 24 for International Coastal Cleanup Day. The Cleanup was at Picnic Point Beach, where over a dozen volunteers picked up nearly 75 pounds of trash. The Cleanup utilized the Escaped Trash Protocol developed by the EPA to assess the impact of trash of the beach. The data collected from this citizen science work will be used for a region-wide effort to better understand trash loading throughout Puget Sound.
- MRC Staff have finalized the Amendment to the Port Susan contract with ESA to work on Phase 2 of this project. The notice to proceed was issued in early October. A kick-off meeting is scheduled with Snohomish County MRC Members and Staff and Island County Members and staff for November 15. A draft communications plan is set to be completed by December 15.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position interest position. This vacancy is advertised on the MRC homepage <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/>
- The MRC voted to remove their Public Comment period in order to no longer adhere to the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA). This change allows the MRC to meet virtually as they wish and hold hybrid meetings on a quarterly basis. The Public Comment has been replaced with “Community Updates”.

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff will share as a separate document to MRC staff and the Commission:

- Representative Debra Lekanoff from the 40th district provided opening remarks for the meeting and thanked the Commission and MRCs for all you are doing. She shared information on the some of the important issues coming up in the next state legislative session, such as investments in clean water and habitat and discussed some of the issues surrounding net ecological gain, which was a centerpiece of [HR 1117](#), a bill Rep. Lekanoff sponsored in the last biennial session.
- Jan Newton with the Applied Physics Laboratory of the University of Washington (<http://oceanacidification.uw.edu>) shared information on a Backyard Buoys project that she and partners are working on. More information at www.backyardbuoys.org. She also gave a quick

overview of the Northwest Association of Networked Ocean Observing Systems. More information: <http://www.nanoos.org/>.

- 2023 Northwest Straits conference: All MRC members are encouraged to save the date for our 2023 conference, to be held on November 3-4 at the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend.
- The Commission welcomed Puget Sound Partnership Special Assistant for Federal Affairs Ahren Stroming as the new alternate member to the Commission.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

Next meeting

December 9, 2022 - Northwest Straits Commission meeting: 10am-12pm via Zoom. Find more information [on our website](#).



Minutes

December 9, 2022 - 10:00 AM-12:00PM
Zoom - Virtual meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Chris Castner, Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Alan Clark (Clallam), Ahren Stroming (Puget Sound Partnership-alternate), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Barbara Bennett (Island – Alternate), Nan McKay, Julia Parrish

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Dana Oster, Leah Robison

Others in Attendance: Tessa Francis (Puget Sound Institute) Brooke Friesen (NW Straits Foundation), Sarah Fisker (Jefferson MRC), Austin Rose (Whatcom), Sam Whitridge (San Juan MRC), Troy McKelvey (Jefferson MRC), Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Monica Montgomery (Jefferson MRC)

Absent: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Laura Blackmore, Cecilia Gobin, Christina Koons (San Juan)

Welcome and Introductions

Vice Chair Tom Cowan opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgment and introductions of attendees.

The Commission approved the minutes from the October 28 meeting by consensus with one correction to note that Jeff Taylor reported for Jefferson MRC.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom Cowan reported on the main topics of the November committee meeting, which included the discussion around Commission program focus areas and needs, and the draft Diversity, Equity, Inclusion goals that will be discussed later on the agenda.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia reported that scheduling has been challenging for the committee. The committee work is now moving to implement the [Articles of Association](#), which includes working with Dana on a 2023 schedule and phased approach for how the committee can support the MRC proposal process. They are also seeking to identify new members to nominate for expanded committee membership. In the near future the committee will identify a member to participate on the 2023 conference planning committee.

External Relations Committee: Chris Castner reported that there has not been a full committee meeting for a few months. There has been no activity on the Northwest Straits reauthorization bill, but committee

members are in contact with congressional staff and the primary contact at Senator Murray's office is now back after a leave of absence as she worked on the election campaign.

Business items

- Retreat planning committee – Lucas outlined the plans that are coming together for the March 30-31 planning retreat, which will be held in La Conner. He asked the members of the Commission to contact him if interested in participating in the planning group.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Goals – Lucas thanked Allie Simpson for her work putting together the draft goals document included in the packet. The Executive Committee has reviewed the draft goals and recommended that the Commission consider the goals for approval. The Commission discussed next steps and the process for moving forward. The Commission moved and approved the goals by consensus.

Shoreline Restoration for Nearshore Fishes

Tessa Francis of the Puget Sound Institute shared a presentation on shoreline restoration. She noted that shorelines are a critical area where stressors from land can impact habitat, and also where people live and gather. Studying shorelines allows her to study species interactions and how human activities impact ecosystems.

Tessa shared the results of her work on a project to assess fish abundance associated with characteristics of nearshore environments such as natural, armored, or restored shorelines. Initial results found fish abundance and nearshore characteristics varied by fish species. For example, herring showed a preference for natural shorelines over armored and restored shorelines, while eelgrass was the strongest indicator of chum salmon and location along a known migratory corridor had the strongest association of chinook salmon presence. Next steps will look to extend to incorporate broader datasets. Tessa is available and interested in joining individual MRC meetings to present research.

Partner updates

Puget Sound Partnership: Ahren Stroming mentioned that the Puget SOS bill was included in the [National Defense Authorization Act](#) that was passed by the House December 8. They are hoping that this is the vehicle that will get it passed. The bill will create a national program office for Puget Sound, elevating it to be similar to the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay.

The Partnership also recently updated some of the Puget Sound Vital Signs related to Economic Vitality. The three indicators recently updated were: employment in natural resources industries; percent of employment in natural resource industries, and natural resource industry output. View the Vital Signs here: <https://vitalsigns.pugetsoundinfo.wa.gov/>

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don reported on the Salish Sea Conservation Corps and recruiting for the ten-member cohort going through the program this winter. The Foundation has a commitment to recruiting

for diversity. They are focused on Whatcom County universities and colleges to start with. They are seeking mentors to support the participants. Don provided a description of the mentor role for distribution with the post-meeting materials. He also mentioned that there were scholarship applications submitted for the Caroline Gibson Scholarship, and they plan to award three scholarships this cycle.

MRC Updates

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

Clallam – Alan Clark

- Continued forage fish sampling. Their sites are at Cline Spit, Elwha beaches, and Ediz Hook. Due to high tides, snow, and waves, only Cline Spit was accessible this month.
- The MRC will reach out to newly elected Department of Community Development Director and County Commissioner.
- Rebecca Mahan attended Responding to Climate Change Impacts to Intertidal Shellfish Resources Workshop.

Island – Barbara Bennett

- MRC Presentation for Navy Families: MRC Chair, Barbara Bennett worked with local Navy veterans to set up an opportunity to speak to a group about our MRC. She did a wonderful job tying the work of the Island MRC in with basic information about the importance of our marine ecosystems. 36 attended, most were retired Navy along with their spouses. We look forward to finding new ways to communicate our work to the different populations in Island County. Barb was successful in recruiting members to join the MRC at this event. We have one retired navy person apply already.
- Hoypus Point Planting Party: Our MRC worked with NWSF to host a planting party. We focused on recruiting folks to help with the planting since Lisa and Brooke focused on the details for the day of. It was an exciting day that was very rewarding. 1,300 plants were successfully put into the ground. Volunteers seemed to leave with smiles on their faces. Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers.
- Coupeville Wharf Video: Back in July we worked with the Sound Water Stewards, Atlantis Steam, Blue Skies Drone, to get video from above and below the Coupeville Wharf. The MRC helped to identify the underwater organisms found in the film and taught the Atlantis Steam students about the importance of our marine ecosystem. The video will be hosted and shown at the Coupeville Wharf. The video covers topics like history and natural history of the local area. Currently, the video credits say Kelly Zupich, MRC. I have put in a request to Sound Water Stewards to change it to say Island County Marine Resources Committee. <https://vimeo.com/767123994>

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC hosted one last rain garden work party on October 28, attended by 4 volunteers and 2 staff who helped weed, replant, and mulch two rain gardens at Franklin/Adams and Lincoln/Adams in Port Townsend.

- The MRC swapped out the Port Townsend waterfront no-anchor zone spar buoys with winter floats in preparation of the stormy winter season.

San Juan – Sam Whitridge

- Ten boats in Friday Harbor and surrounds were tagged during a derelict vessel patrol on Nov 18th
- Two MRC positions have been vacated and their openings are currently being advertised
- Letter sent to San Juan County Council outlining concerns highlighted by the sinking of Aleutian Isle

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- Bowman Bay Planting Party: Skagit MRC partnered with the Northwest Straits Foundation to host a planting party at Bowman Bay on November 3rd. 17 volunteers, MRC members, and NW Straits Foundation (NWSF) staff planted over 175 native plants. We were able to get it done a lot faster than anticipated, thanks to our wonderful volunteers and NWSF staff. The atmospheric river arrived shortly afterwards to give the plants a good soaking.
- Kids on the Beach: 50 8th grade students from Conway Middle School participated in beach seining and forage fish survey activities at the Fidalgo Bay RV Park on November 18. Despite the cold weather, a broken hose, getting locked out of the building twice, and finding very few fish or forage fish eggs, it was a great day for Kids on the Beach!

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The Port Susan Subcommittee from Snohomish County and Island County attended a kick-off meeting with ESA consultants on November 15. The group discussed the draft communications plan, which is set to be completed by December 15.
- The Snohomish MRC partnered with WSU Beach Watchers to host a Beach Cleanup at Howarth Park on November 22.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- As of January 31, 2023, the MRC will have two vacancies, one Citizen-at-Large (current member is eligible to re-apply and one Scientific). An application for the Scientific seat was received on 12/2 and will be reviewed by the Executive Committee in mid-December.
- The MRC has drafted a comment letter to the City of Bellingham expressing concerns about the proposed housing development on the north side of North Chuckanut Bay. The 30-day comment period began 11/24. It is anticipated that the MRC's letter will be submitted by mid-December.

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff will share as a separate document to MRC staff and the Commission:

- The Commission approved a Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) vision and goals statement. You can see the statement [here](#) (p. 9). NW Straits Commission staff will begin developing a process to create action items for each of the DEI goals. More information will follow in the coming months
- [Tessa Francis](#) from the Puget Sound Institute presented a study assessing the impact of shoreline armoring on chinook salmon, Chum salmon, herring, and surf smelt. Tessa welcomes the opportunity to present at individual MRC meetings.
- The NW Straits Commission Science Advisory Committee is recruiting new members. MRC members and others are encouraged to suggest names for potential members. More details about the role and expectations of committee members can be found in the Committee's [Articles of Association](#).
- The NW Straits Foundation is starting a [Salish Sea Conservation Corps program](#). The program will create internships for early career professionals. The Foundation is looking for individuals to mentor interns. Contact Don Hunger don@nwstraitsfoundation.org or Brooke Friesen friesen@nwstraitsfoundation.org for more information.
- League of Women voters [released a study](#) on the Shoreline Management Act (SMP) assessing its effectiveness over the last 50 years. Barbara Bennett of the Island MRC has compiled resources on county Comprehensive Plans from an SMP learning group made up of MRC representatives. Please reach out to her if you'd like access to those materials: bennbluw@gmail.com.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

Round table

Tim Ellis noted that Friends of Skagit Beaches contacted WSU Beach Watchers to help on stormwater outflow sampling in Snohomish County. He's going to be helping with a few sites locally. Diane Hennebert said that there has been great success with this program in Anacortes.

Upcoming meetings

January 27, 2023 - Northwest Straits Commission meeting: 10am-12pm via Zoom. Find more information [on our website](#).

February 24, 2023 - Northwest Straits Commission meeting **in-person** (Snohomish County)

March 30-31, 2023 - Northwest Straits Initiative retreat. La Conner Country Inn.