



Minutes

**April 28, 2023 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting**

Attendees:

Commission Members: Elsa Schwartz (Island - Chair), Julie Schlenger (Snohomish-alternate), Alan Clark (Clallam), Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Ahren Stroming (Puget Sound Partnership-alternate), Nan McKay, Karin Roemers-Kleven (San Juan-alternate),

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

Others in Attendance: Allan Hicks (Snohomish), Austin Rose (Whatcom), Ron Thom, Jill Lipoti, Phil Salditt (Foundation)

Absent: Cecilia Gobin (NWIFC), Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Julia Parrish, Ginny Broadhurst, Christina Koons

Welcome and Introductions:

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

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom shared the Committee's nomination of a slate of candidates for election of officers. It was moved and approved by consensus to elect Tim Ellis as the Chair and Alan Clark as the Vice Chair for the NW Straits Commission. Appointments will begin at the next Commission meeting in May.

The Commission thanked Elsa Schwartz and Tom Cowan for their work as Commission Chair and Vice Chair, as well as Jeff Taylor for serving on the Executive Committee as an MRC representative appointed by the Committee Chair.

The Committee also recommended approval of revisions to the Rules of Procedure, which outline more robust descriptions of the Executive, Science Advisory, and External Relations Committees, as well as the roles and responsibilities of each Committee. The Commission moved and approved the amended Rules of Procedure by consensus.



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Tom shared information from the April 17 Executive Committee meeting where the Committee reviewed the San Juan County MRC's draft proposal for a project at Cattle Point. The Committee recommendation is that funding capital projects on buildings operated by state agencies does not align with the NW Straits Commission funding policy. The Committee recommended that NWSC staff request information about the signage and artwork components of the project to determine whether they align with the funding policy.

Science Advisory Committee: Dana shared that there is a new Science Advisory Committee member; [David Trimbach](#).

External Relations Committee: Tom shared that the External Relations Committee is focusing on NW Straits Initiative federal reauthorization. Members of the Committee recently had a meeting with Senator Murray's staff. Tom noted that six of the seven MRC county commissions/councils have signed letters of support for reauthorization, San Juan County Council is expected to sign a letter of support within the next week.

Business Items:

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

Kelp Plan Workshop: Jeff briefly shared about the Kelp Plan Action Workshop that took place on March 1-2, where 46 individuals from different organizations, tribal communities, and partners attended. Currently, Jeff is working on the review that will take place at the end of June.

Kayak Monitoring Kickoff: Jeff shared that the Kayak Kelp Monitoring Program has kicked off with a virtual meeting held April 20. At the meeting, members from the NW Straits Foundation, NW Straits Commission, as well as WA Dept of Natural Resources presented on safety, kayaking, and monitoring logistics, as well as the data being put together through a Story Map by Allie. MRC members will be practicing their skills and training leading up to June before the season officially begins.

Derelict Vessels: Dana updated the Commission on the derelict vessel project, where several MRC and tribal partners have been working to identify vessels of concern for priority. Dana shared some of the vessels that have recently been pulled out of the water. In Snohomish County, the vessel "Elusive Dream" and "Shiloh" were tied to a derelict dock. The "Elusive Dream" was



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removed. The "Shiloh" sunk more, and its removal is being worked on. DNR is working on recovering the dock as well.

In Island County the "Island Sprinter" was removed.

San Juan County also just removed a barge from Blind Bay on Shaw Island and are making plans to remove "Metaphor" on Orcas Island.

Green Crab Update: Allie updated the Commission about the European green crab field work that has begun for the season. She shared about the WA Conservation Corps (WCC) crew and their passionate work for the program. The WCC crew participated in a training on green crab molt search, which will be a new training through WSU. Allie and Leah have been out trapping in Samish Bay, where they have caught five crabs, and Drayton Harbor, where they have caught two crabs. Allie also shared that there is still a position open for the Veterans Conservation Corps internship.

NW Straits Conference: Caitlyn briefly shared information about the NW Straits Initiative Conference on November 3-4 at the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend. The Conference Planning Committee is working on the agenda, and updates will be sent via e-mail and can be found on the [Conference Website](#).

San Juan County Commission meeting: Caitlyn shared information about the NW Straits Commission meeting in San Juan County on June 23. The meeting will take place on Lopez Island at the Grace Episcopal Church, first meeting at Odlin State Park to hear presentations from the San Juan County MRC. Caitlyn will be sending out an e-mail soon regarding ferry information, meeting start and end times, as well as other logistics.

Member Updates: Lucas shared that Ginny Broadhurst has been appointed to the NW Straits Commission by Governor Inslee. Ginny will be filling the position vacated by Chris Castner, and her appointment is effective as of April 26.

Beneficial Use of Dredge Materials in the Lower Columbia River: Speed Date Chanda Littles: Ron Thom introduced Chanda Littles, a coastal ecologist with interest in coastal resource management and environmental stewardship. She is most interested in applied research that can inform decision making, and works with federal partners, researchers, practitioners, and



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sponsors to assess ways to improve habitat conditions for juvenile salmonid species in the lower Columbia River. Habitat restoration projects that utilize dredge materials.

Chanda Littles presented on beneficial use of dredge materials in the Lower Columbia River. Her presentation is available upon request.

Partner Updates:

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia was not present.

Puget Sound Partnership Update: Ahren shared the finalized information for Puget Sound Day on the Hill which can be found at www.psdonth.org.

Foundation Updates: Nan McKay and Phil Salditt were present for the NW Straits Foundation updates. Nan shared that the Foundation is working on an event to celebrate the Foundation's 20 years of marine conservation through the Initiative. They are aiming to attract more people to support the work of the Initiative.

Nan also shared that several new board members have been appointed.

Phil shared an update that there has been positive feedback about the work and projects being done with the Salish Sea Conservation Corps, currently composed of ten students from Western Washington University

MRC Updates:

Clallam – Alan Clark

- The MRC Has continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Shore Friendly hosted a workshop *Living with Sea Level Rise* March 11, 2023, at the Dungeness River Nature Center
- Coordinator Rebecca Mahan attended a training on European Green Crab molt surveys using the MyCoast app. The training was hosted by WA SeaGrant and WSU Extension service.



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Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC hosted their first Digging for Dinner event in three years, taking place on April 23.
- The MRC had a retreat on April 1 to discuss projects for the next two-year grant cycle and finalized decisions at the subsequent April 4 MRC monthly meeting.
- The MRC is offering community presentations to share about Olympia oyster restoration opportunities in Kilisut Harbor and to solicit input from community members on May 4 and 7.

Island County – Elsa Schwartz

- The MRC had a virtual retreat focused on project planning. The MRC has had lots of changeover with four new members.
- The MRC is continuing with forage fish and bull kelp monitoring.

San Juan County – Karin Roemers-Kleven

- The MRC had a retreat at the Friday Harbor Labs discussing projects.
- There are several new MRC members.
- At the retreat, the MRC discussed the F/V Aleutian Isle oil spill and what can be learned from this event. They are also focusing on marina oil spills, and the oil spill committee is creating an approach to tackle small-scale spill prevention in marinas.
- The MRC is interested in expanding the Plastic Free Salish Sea project to other MRCs and the broader Salish Sea bioregion.
- The MRC hosted an event for the Great Island Cleanup, where 130 members and volunteers picked up 1.13 tons of garbage on San Juan Island alone.

Snohomish – Allan Hicks

- Beach cleanups in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers continue to be held quarterly. The last event was held on April 22 held in partnership with Tulalip Tribes and the Beach Watchers for Earth Day.
- The MRC is working on their project proposals for the 2023-25 MRC grant.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- The MRC is working on project proposals for the 2023-2025 for MRC grants.



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- From April 11-13 the MRC had their Kids on the Beach spring program involving 75 6th graders from Sedro-Woolley where the students engaged with collecting scientific data, species identification, and shoreline health importance.

Whatcom – Austin Rose

- Austin presented at the County Council, highlighting MRC successes and the history of the NW Straits April 18.
- DNR is currently planning for the removal of the vessel in Bellingham tidelands with the cost estimate at \$60,000 which is right on target with the CDS funds of \$62,000. It is currently unknown when this work will start, but DNR is in the planning stages for renewal.
- The MRC is partnering with the Whatcom County PIC program and Whatcom County Health on an outreach event at the beach entrance to North Chuckanut Bay on May 25.
- The MRC has hired a second staff, Dana Flerchinger.

Meeting Highlights and Action Items:

The Commission identified the following key highlights:

- Save the Date! Northwest Straits Initiative Conference, November 3-4 at the Port Townsend Maritime Center. Updates will be sent via e-mail or found on the [Conference Website](#).
- The Commission has approved Tim Ellis as the new Chair, as well as Alan Clark as the new Vice Chair.
- Ginny Broadhurst has been appointed to the Commission by Governor Inslee
- The June 23 Commission meeting will be held at the Grace Episcopal Church on Lopez Island, and we will be featuring MRC work. Please contact Caitlyn with any questions and be looking for e-mails related to this meeting.
- Chanda Littles presented on beneficial use of dredge materials in the Lower Columbia River. Her presentation is available upon request.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

*The next meeting will be the Northwest Straits Commission meeting May 26, 2023, over Zoom.