



Minutes

January 27, 2023- 10:00AM-12:00PM

Zoom – Virtual Meeting

Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Christina Koons (San Juan), Alan Clark (Clallam), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Cecilia Gobin (NWIFC), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Sarah Fiske (Jefferson-Alternate)

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

Others in Attendance: Brooke Friesen (NW Straits Foundation), Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Monica Montgomery (Jefferson)

Absent: Julia Parrish, Nan McKay

Welcome and Introductions:

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgement. The Commission approved the minutes from the December 9 meeting as written by consensus.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom Cowan updated the Commission and attendees on the January 23 meeting. Tom Cowan reported that Nan McKay has been appointed to serve as chair of the External Relations Committee and will therefore now also be a member of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee discussed the proposed budget and recommended the three-year budget proposal for approval. Lucas Hart shared the three-year budget plan with the Commission for review. The third year of the proposal is uncertain as that falls in the next state budget cycle. The Commission moved and approved by consensus the proposed three-year budget plan with the delegation of any final revisions to be approved by the Executive Committee. Tom added that at the retreat, there will be discussion of MRC and regional projects.

Science Advisory Committee: Dana Oster presented on behalf of Julia Parrish. Dana outlined that the Committee is finalizing their 2023 work plan and schedule, inclusive of updated articles of association and the shifted roles for the Committee. The Committee will be considering how to support projects put forward by MRCs, giving input on linkages to other projects across the Puget Sound, as well as discussing ways to expand and support MRC projects. The Committee is also working on how to integrate their Committee into MRC conference planning, and Committee member Tom Mumford will serve on the conference planning committee. The Committee is looking to gradually expand to 7-12 members and have nominations for Committee members they are working to appoint.



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External Relations Committee: Lucas Hart presented for the Committee on behalf of Nan McKay. The Committee met with Senator Patty Murray about Northwest Straits Initiative reauthorization bill, and the Committee will begin the process of outreach to the Washington state federal delegation about the bill. Lucas gave a brief update on the MRC state funding proviso, which made it into the Governor's proposed budget which has not been passed. The Commission is also a partner on a kelp funding proviso in the state budget for the Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan, which would provide funding for kelp work by the Commission as well as continuing to serve as a fiscal agent to direct funding to other partners for additional kelp work.

Puget Sound Partnership Update: Laura Blackmore presented her updates, sharing that last month, Congress passed the PUGET SOS Bill, which creates a Puget Sound recovery program office at the EPA, and puts Puget Sound on the same level as other nationally significant water bodies, such as Chesapeake Bay. The bill also codifies the Puget Sound Task Force, which is made up of 13 federal agencies operating under a MOU, working together on the Puget Sound Action Agenda. Laura stated that Senator Murray supporting increased funding for the [Puget Sound Geographic Fund](#). The Partnership is working on finalizing dates for the Puget Sound Day on the Hill, likely to be the week of May 8.

Business Items:

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

- Caitlyn Blair, new Program Coordinator at the Commission introduced herself.
- Lucas reported some legislative updates on bills that need to pass the House of Origin by February 17. Some bills include HB 1085, HB 1131, HB 1215 and SB 5266 Companion bills, SB 5104, HB 1170 and SB 5093 Companion bills, and HB 1145 and SB 5371 Companion bills.
- The May 26 in-person Commission meeting was changed to a virtual meeting, and the virtual June 23 Commission meeting was changed to in-person with the location in San Juan County upon consensus.
- Allie shared updates from the Annual Kelp Monitoring Data Review Workshop. The workshop had over 50 attendees, and some statistics that were shared from last season for kelp monitoring, were that 50 volunteers surveyed 22 different kelp beds and 311 acres of kelp.
- Leah shared about the MRC Forage Fish data meeting. Site leads shared sampling updates from their MRCs, attendees heard from WDFW about the results from their sampling efforts and heard from the NW Straits Foundation about forage fish sampling at nearshore restoration sites.
- Sasha reminded members about the November 3-4 in person conference in Port Townsend. All MRC members are encouraged to attend.

Partner Updates:



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Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin shared that they are keeping updated on the legislative season, reminding members that tribes made the request for standard riparian zone protection in 2019 at the Centennial Accord. Lucas, Dana, and Cecilia have been coordinating participation in derelict vessel removal with several tribes.

NW Straits Foundation Updates: Don Hunger shared staffing and board member updates, with Tom Mumford and Rachel Benbrook as new members of the Foundation Board. Don reported that the officer on the Board this year is Jerry Masters as the President, and Lee Whitford as the Vice President. Phil Salditt is the new Treasurer, and Nan McKay has been appointed to Secretary. Brooke Friesen updated members on the status of the Salish Sea Conservation Corps, they have ten members from Western Washington University and Bellingham Technical College. Their first community event is at the Fairhaven Library on February 8 from 4-5:30 PM.

MRC Updates:

Island County – Elsa Schwartz

- The MRC is continuing with forage fish monitoring and bull kelp surveys and invited 5th-8th graders to help with forage fish monitoring.
- Some Island County MRC members sat in on the Climate Action Panel and listened to high school students' ideas about climate change.
- Island County MRC has a few openings, and they are looking to target farming and Navy communities to represent on the MRC

Clallam – Alan Clark

- Clallam MRC was on the front page of the [Peninsula Daily News](#).
- Jefferson and Clallam County are partnering with Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe to restore oyster beds that were damaged during the heat dome this past summer.
- Forage fish sampling continues at Cline Spit as well as Ediz Hook.
- MRC members are planning a retreat at the Dungeness River Center in February.

Jefferson – Sarah Fiskén, MRC Alternate

- MRC voted to establish a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion subcommittee to better represent and engage the broader community in East Jefferson County.
- Storm surge monitoring continues, with recent surveys conducted on December 2 and 26, and a site assessment on January 23.
- Forage fish sampling and monitoring continues.



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Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- The MRC- Salish Sea School Intern and the Forage Fish STaRs student finished their research project in January. The Final Report is now available on the [Skagit MRC website](#) and the STaRS student presentations are available on [YouTube](#).
- The 2023 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program is now at full capacity (26), and we've started a waiting list. Classes start February 7 – April 25, 2023, Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay NERR. The training schedule is available on the [Skagit MRC website](#).

San Juan County – Christina Koons

- A draft of the Marine Stewardship Area Plan is now complete. The MRC is now working on planning a Marine Managers Workshop in the spring to work on prioritizing actions in the MSA Plan.
- There are two open positions on the MRC, and four candidates have been interviewed. One candidate has a strong science background and is hoping they will be on the Science Advisory Committee.
- The MRC has decided to meet in person quarterly in the San Juan Islands.
- The Plastic Free Salish Sea Program is mentoring high school students to assist them in doing community projects.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The Port Susan Subcommittee is reviewing the draft Communications Strategy. There was a subcommittee meeting on 29th with Island County and Snohomish County subcommittee members. Comments will be provided to ESA by early January, and a final Communications Strategy will be complete in late January.
- There are four openings on the MRC.
- 84 people showed up for the Edmonds starlight beach walk on January 18, which the MRC hosted in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers.
- The Marine Vegetation mapping project in partnership with WA Dept of Natural Resources (DNR) is complete. Snohomish County hired DNR to map the entire Snohomish County shoreline over the last 3 years. The report found that the shoreline of Snohomish County supports 912 hectares of eelgrass and 168 hectares of understory kelp. This was compared to an older dataset from 1999-2007 when there was approximately in Snohomish County. DNR will present their findings at the February 15 MRC Meeting.
- The Meadowdale beach restoration project is now complete and open to the public. The Snohomish MRC's Meadowdale webpage has been updated with the Story Map and information on Meadowdale: <https://www.snocomrc.org/projects/meadowdale-beach-and-estuary-restoration/>

Whatcom – Bob Cecile



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- The MRC Executive Committee wrote a recommendation to the County Executive for the appointments of Glen Alexander (Alex) to fulfill his second term in a Citizen-at-Large position, and Rick Beauregard to fill the Scientific Intern vacancy. Appointments are expected on January 24.
- A job announcement for an MRC extra staff person was posted on January 19. The announcement will close on February 12. For more information [CLICK HERE](#). This position is grant funded for an average of ~24hrs/week for the 2023 calendar year.
- The Committee discussed suggested amendments to their Policies and Procedures to address a clear protocol for MRC meetings now that most meetings are hosted virtually. Suggested amendments clarified the meaning of consensus when it comes to decision making, and protocols for voting and meeting summaries from a hybrid meeting.

Meeting Highlights and Action Items:

The Commission identified the following key highlights:

- The Commission has passed a budget plan for 2023-2025, which will include funding for MRCs in the next grant cycle in the amount of \$192,500 per MRC annually for the next two years if the proposed state budget passes.
- The Northwest Straits Commission conference will be held on November 3-4, 2023, at the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend. The Commission is seeking members interested in participating in the Conference Planning Committee. Contact Sasha (horst@nwstraits.org) for more information about the committee or to join the group.
- The PUGET SOS bill was passed by Congress as part of the National Defense Authorization Act. The bill creates a Puget Sound recovery program office at the EPA and puts Puget Sound on the same level as other nationally significant water bodies, such as Chesapeake Bay. The bill also codifies the Puget Sound Task Force, which is made up of 13 federal agencies operating under a Memorandum of Understanding, working together on the Puget Sound Action Agenda.
- The Northwest Straits Initiative retreat is scheduled for March 30-31 at the La Conner Country Inn for members of the Commission and Foundation board.

Round Table

- Tom mentioned that several MRCs have openings, or have just filled openings, and wants to know if there are any county commissioners or council that do not rely on the MRC for recommendations for new members.
- If members have not responded to the February invitation to the in-person Commission meeting, please do so.



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*The next Commission meeting will be held in person on Friday, February 24 at the Stillaguamish Natural Resources Center.



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February 24, 2023- 10:00AM-2:00PM
In-Person Meeting-Swinomish Natural Resources Center
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Christina Koons (San Juan), Alan Clark (Clallam), Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Nan McKay, Cecilia Gobin (NWIFC), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson)

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

Others in Attendance: Elisa Dawson (Snohomish), Franchesca Perez (Snohomish MRC, Stillaguamish Tribe staff)

Absent: Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Julia Parrish

Welcome and Introductions:

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgement. The Commission approved the minutes from the January 27 meeting as written by consensus.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom Cowan updated the Commission and attendees on the February 22 Executive Committee meeting. Tom Cowan reported that the committee has made the decision to write a letter of support for [Senate Bill 5371](#) (Protecting southern resident orcas from vessels).

The Executive Committee discussed the Commission's marine programs, the progress of these programs, and the possibilities of expanding the programs based on MRC needs and goals, and goals of the Northwest Straits Initiative. This topic is to be discussed at further meetings and is part of the core topics for discussion at the retreat.

Science Advisory Committee: Dana Oster shared with the Commission and attendees that the most prominent activity for the Committee right now is Committee membership. The Committee is in the process of slowly expanding and has extended a few invitations and notified others of nominations to gauge interest in the future. Committee member Tom Mumford is serving on the conference planning committee as a way to integrate the Science Advisory Committee into conference planning.

External Relations Committee: Nan McKay shared with the Commission and attendees about the bill that Senator Murray is sponsoring to reauthorize the Northwest Straits Initiative. Nan outlined that the bill was sent to senate committee in the last session of Congress. Nan also mentioned that Puget Sound



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Day on the Hill will be held May 9-11. The event is a way to educate members of Congress about the work being done in Puget Sound.

Business Items:

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

Derelict vessel removal: Dana Oster presented on the derelict vessel removal project, which will be done in collaboration with WA Dept of Natural Resources (DNR), MRCs, and tribal partners. The funding comes from the fiscal year 2022 Congressionally Directed Spending. Dana outlined the core partnerships with MRCs and tribes that are part of the project workgroup. There are nine vessels identified for removal, and two vessel turn-in events that have been prioritized by the workgroup. The vessel list created from input by MRCs and tribal partners was organized into three tiers to prioritize removal operations. Commission staff and DNR are coordinating with the Makah Tribe to host a vessel turn-in event where vessels can be brought to be crushed and recycled. Other counties have also expressed interest in hosting a vessel-turn in event. Dana will keep everyone up-to-date and encourages MRCs to identify if there is a continued interest in the derelict vessel removal program.

Voluntary no-anchor zones: Dana presented updates on the voluntary no-anchor zone project. Since 2020, MRC partners have identified a selection of sites where there is moderate to high anchoring activity along important eelgrass beds. Dana reported that this project has worked well in Jefferson County, and San Juan County has established a few no-anchor zones as well. Dana shared that there has been concerns from tribes about the no-anchor zone marker buoys limiting traditional fishing access. A tiered approach is being developed to better tackle barriers of buoy maintenance and fishing access.

Retreat: Caitlyn Blair updated the Commission and attendees about the retreat at the La Conner Country Inn March 30-31. Caitlyn shared the outcomes from the Retreat Planning Committee meeting on February 14. The Committee began to outline some of the goals for the retreat as follows:

- 1) Celebrate the accomplishments of the last year
- 2) Reenergize and revisit the relationships and collaborations among the Commission, Foundation, and MRCs
- 3) Increase the understanding and scope of the Northwest Straits Initiative's impact.

MRC Presentation – Snohomish / Island: Elisa Dawson presented on behalf of Snohomish MRC and on behalf of Scott Chase from Island MRC about the work being done on the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area, and the progress in the past ten years. The Conservation Action Plan was finalized in 2012 and addresses target species and habitats and looks to encompass a wide range of issues and strategies to address the issues. Elisa pointed out that they are still seeing many of the same issues at Port Susan that existed ten years ago. The MRCs are working on evaluating and executing the best ways



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for stakeholders to get involved, and are in the process of implementing communication and outreach strategies.

Public Comment: There was no public comment

Partner Updates:

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin shared with the Commission and attendees that they are tracking legislative bills, including the bill relating to protection and restoration of riparian areas. Cecilia mentioned that tribes have been working on issues surrounding recreational impacts on treaty rights and have formed a working group to discuss the concerns on recreation affects on treaty resources and off-reservation treaty areas to hunt and fish. Cecilia has been coordinating with the NWIFC director for the agenda and priorities for Puget Sound Day on the Hill.

Cecilia added that last year, there was a round table process with several stakeholders to tackle issues surrounding riparian zones. These round tables went well, however the bill that was requested eventually died. There was a commitment to putting forth a budget for the conservation commission to do a riparian grant program and salmon recovery and noted that tribes would like to see more of a state-wide standard on the ground for riparian zone restoration.

Puget Sound Partnership Update: Laura Blackmore shared the finalized dates of Puget Sound Day on the Hill, which are May 9-11; all are invited. Laura reminded everyone to contact her if they are interested in signing up to be present. Registration is online at <https://www.psdonth.org/>.

MRC Updates:

Island County – Elsa Schwartz

- The MRC is continuing Forage Fish monitoring.
- There is a working meeting in place for derelict vessels and shoreline armoring.
- The upcoming MRC meeting is Tuesday March 7, 2023.

Clallam – Alan Clark

- Continued forage fish sampling on three beaches.
- Shore Friendly will be hosting a workshop *Living with Sea Level Rise* on March 11, 2023.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor



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- The Fort Townsend forage fish monitoring team surveyed a second time in January to collect samples from all five sample sites, as tides were higher than predicted the first attempt and blocked off beach access.
- The no-anchor zones team is planning to head out to Mystery Bay this weekend, on February 11, the first time since the pandemic began, to do some much-needed maintenance.
- The storm surge monitoring team went out to the Salmon Club and Chetzemoka Park sites with Ian Miller on January 23 to assess survey elevation control points and to discuss methods for measuring water elevation.

San Juan County – Christina Koons

- Two new members have been appointed to the MRC.
- The Marine Managers' Workshop is scheduled for April 4-5, held at the UW Friday Harbor Labs. The intention is to review the updated Marine Stewardship Area Plan.
- The Great Islands Clean Up for Plastic Free Salish Sea will be held on Earth Day (April 22, 2023).

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The MRC and Snohomish County have drafted an Intergovernmental Services Agreement with ORCA (Ocean Research College Academy). ORCA is an early college program for high school juniors and seniors. The contract is for the calendar year of 2023 to collaborate on collecting water quality data in Possession Sound. Snohomish County is reviewing the scope of work and contract, which we hope will be signed in March 2023.
- DNR recently removed 290 creosote pilings from the Snohomish Estuary utilizing the MRC's pilings removal inventory from the 2019-2021 MRC Grant.
- DNR presented their findings from the comprehensive eelgrass survey of the Snohomish County shoreline at the MRC February 15 meeting. At that meeting, the MRC also reviewed the online map being created by Snohomish County which compares the most recent data to a historic 1999-2007 survey of eelgrass that was done in Snohomish County. The MRC is in the early stages of brainstorming a scope of work for the 2023- 2025 grant that will focus on marine vegetation.

Skagit - written report

- Planning is underway for the spring Kids on the Beach Program. 75 6th graders from Sedro Woolley will be participating, with 3 field days at Bayview State Park and an in-class visit.
- The Shore Friendly Workshop in partnership with the Northwest Straits Foundation and Swinomish Tribe has tentatively been set for Saturday April 29, 2023.
- There was a great article on pinto abalone in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#). Field work is now underway.



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Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- The job announcement for the MRC's additional staff person closed on February 15, 2023. A decision was made the week of February 20, and there is a new Whatcom MRC staff appointed.
- The MRC agreed to take on a new project for the 2023-2025 grant round – Harmful Algae Bloom Monitoring in Drayton Harbor and Birch Bay.
- Hannah Pittman is the new MRC Forage Fish Intern, hired to take the lead on monthly surveys and volunteer coordination.

Meeting Highlights and Action Items:

The Commission identified the following key highlights:

- The Puget Sound Partnership and Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission are co-hosting Puget Sound Day on the Hill from May 9-11. All are invited to participate (at their own expense), more information and registration are [online](#). Reauthorization of the Northwest Straits Initiative may be included as a priority for 2023.
- The derelict vessel project in collaboration with WA Dept of Natural Resources is underway and representatives from several MRCs and tribal partners are involved in the workgroup. Details for a vessel turn-in event are being worked out, with a goal of hosting an event with the Makah Tribe.
- Elisa Dawson shared about the collaborative efforts from San Juan and Snohomish MRCs on the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area. More information is available on their [website](#).
- The Northwest Straits Commission is now returning to in-person Commission meetings. In-person meetings will generally be held in alternating months, with some adjustments. Information about the monthly meeting dates and locations is on our [website events page](#).
- The 2023 Northwest Straits Conference planning is underway and will take place November 3-4, 2023, at the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend. All members of the MRCs are invited, as well as members of the Commission and Foundation. Please look out for a conference survey coming soon.
- The Northwest Straits Initiative retreat will be held on March 30-31 at the La Conner Country Inn for members of the Commission and Foundation Board.

Round Table



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- The next meeting is the retreat – March 30-31. Jeff mentioned it would be great to have MRC staff invited to future retreats. If members have not indicated accommodation needs or attendance for the March retreat, please e-mail Caitlyn Blair.
- Dana shared that MRC symposiums have gone well, and we are currently mixing up how we feature MRCs with different formats.
- Elsa mentioned that now that we are meeting in person, we can reach out to neighboring MRCs and partners to do joint in-person MRC meetings, presentations, discussions, and project sharing.
- The conference planning is underway, the first planning meeting is Monday February 27, 2023.

*The next meeting will be the Northwest Straits Initiative retreat on March 30-31 at the La Conner Country Inn; open to members of the Commission and Foundation Board.



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**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.



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May 26, 2023 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Ginny Broadhurst, Christina Koons (San Juan), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Elsa Schwartz (Island), Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Nan McKay, Tom Cowan, Don Hunger (Foundation), Julia Parrish

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

Others in Attendance: Austin Rose (Whatcom), Dana Flerchinger (Whatcom)

Absent: Cecilia Gobin (NWIFC), Alan Clark (Vice-chair - Clallam), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Bob Cecile (Whatcom)

Welcome and Introductions:

New chair of the Commission Tim Ellis opened the meeting with introductions and the Tribal Acknowledgement.

Committee Reports:

Executive Committee: Lucas stepped in for Alan to share Executive Committee updates. The Executive Committee welcomed Tim as the Chair and Alan as the Vice-Chair of the NW Straits Commission. Jeff, Elsa, and Tom shared about their leadership roles on the Commission and provided insight on ongoing topics for Tim and Alan to be aware of.

The Committee also debriefed on Nan, Jerry, Lucas, and Jeff's trip to Washington D.C. for Puget Sound Day on the Hill.

The Committee also touched on regional work that the Marine Program at the NW Straits Commission has taken on. The Marine Program outline describes three tiers of project support, which are MRC project support, multi-regional project support, and broad scale project support. The Committee plans to bring this forward to the Commission for discussion at a future meeting.

External Relations Committee: Nan outlined the successes of Puget Sound Day on the Hill, sharing that their attendance, meetings, and activities at the event were very well organized by the Puget Sound Partnership and the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. One of the main



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priorities in attending was to garner support for federal reauthorization of the NW Straits Initiative. Nan shared that Senator Murray is committed to working on reauthorization. Senator Cantwell's staff said she plans to co-sponsor. Meetings were also held with Representative Larsen, Representative Kilmer, and with staff from Representative Schrier and DelBene's offices. Representative Larsen was asked to sponsor a House companion bill. He is reviewing the Senate reauthorization bill to gain a better understanding of the legislation. Nan mentioned that they are working to get a letter from Governor Jay Inslee supporting reauthorization.

Lucas shared that he attended a meeting with Representative Huffman's staff to discuss supporting kelp conservation efforts. Representative Huffman is a Congressman from California. Lucas added that having NW Straits reauthorization as a priority at Puget Sound Day on the Hill helped foster good conversations with our delegation.

Laura added that a survey is going out to all participants to get feedback from the event, and they are hoping to put out a summary report of the event for the first time.

Lucas thanked MRC Staff for their support in gathering letters from each of the seven county councils/commissions. The letters from counties and tribes were shared with members of Congress.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia deferred to Dana to provide updates about the Science Advisory Committee. Dana welcomed new Science Advisory Committee member [David Trimbach](#). Dana mentioned that there will be a Science Advisory Committee meeting in June for members to provide input and engage with MRC project proposals. Julia added that these meetings are to provide helpful insight, and to assist in making the Science Advisory Committee more relevant to MRCs.

Business Items:

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

Welcome Ginny Broadhurst: Lucas invited the Commission to welcome Ginny Broadhurst as the new Governor's Appointee. Ginny shared about her background with the NW Straits Initiative and her current position as the Director of the Salish Sea Institute at Western Washington University.



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Welcome Tim and Alan: Lucas invited the Commission to welcome Tim Ellis and Alan Clark as the Chair and Vice-Chair of the NW Straits Commission.

MRC Grant proposal submissions: Sasha gave an update on the status of MRC grants from the Commission. The due date for MRC proposals was May 26, and MRCs will receive two grants totaling \$192,000(year 1)/\$192,500(year 2) over the next two-year period. Many thanks to the MRC staff and project leads for their work in developing projects and preparing proposals. Next steps are for review and coordination with MRCs, and the full slate of projects will be brought to the Commission for review at a meeting this summer.

NW Straits communication position update: Jessica Owens has been hired as the Communications Coordinator for the NW Straits Commission, starting June 1

State budget updates: Lucas provided updates on the 2023-2025 state budget, The NW Straits Commission will be receiving funding through a kelp proviso to support kelp conservation and monitoring work. In addition to funding for the Commission, money will also be passed through to partners doing kelp conservation work, such as the Squaxin Island Tribe, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, Samish Tribe, and Puget Sound Restoration Fund.

In addition, the MRC funding proviso was included in the state budget, which is \$910,000 for this biennium. This year, the language was also altered to provide more flexibility for MRCs in receiving funds. MRCs can now direct their funding to be used on their projects via the NW Straits Commission.

Green crab funding to the NW Straits Commission will also continue at flat levels through the WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. To bolster funding for The NW Straits Commission's green crab work, a funding request is being submitted to the green crab emergency taskforce workgroup.

NW Straits Commission Meeting – San Juan County: Caitlyn shared that the NW Straits Commission meeting on June 23 will be from 10:45 AM - 2:00 PM on Lopez Island, first at Odlin County Park, where we will hear from the San Juan County MRC about their projects. We will then move the meeting to the Grace Episcopal Church. Please contact Caitlyn with any questions regarding the meeting.

Partner Updates:



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Puget Sound Partnership: Laura shared that Puget Sound Day on the Hill was successful. Laura also mentioned that they held a fruitful Ecosystem Coordination Board meeting in San Juan County. The next leadership council meeting will be June 7-8, where shellfish beds will be a highlight discussion. The Puget Sound Partnership is also looking to collaborate with the Transportation community to work toward salmon recovery efforts.

Foundation Updates: Don shared with the Commission that the NW Straits Foundation will be hosting a 20th anniversary event on June 10 from 2-6 PM at Jerry Masters' house. Don also gave an overview of the successes of the Salish Sea Conservation Corps, where several WWU students were involved with mentorship, trainings, presentations, and hands-on field projects. The NW Straits Foundation is looking for funding for this program for its second year. The crew was proud to announce their findings of 10,544 juvenile chum salmon at Cornet Bay. The NW Straits Foundation has also been working with the journalism program at WWU to provide internships for students at the NW Straits Foundation.

MRC Updates:

Clallam - Alan Clark (not present, written from MRC Report)

- Continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Three Olympia oyster surveys have occurred.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC organized a Digging for Dinner event on April 23. The event provided education to 39 participants about Salish Sea clams, where to find them, and how to harvest safely and sustainably.
- In partnership with Puget Sound Restoration Fund and WDFW, the MRC organized community presentations to share about Olympia oyster restoration opportunities in Kilisut Harbor and to solicit input from Marrowstone community members, on May 4 (virtual) and May 7 (in-person with a beach walk). Over 20 tideland owners have expressed interest in beach walks with biologists and further exploration of possible restoration efforts.
- With the help of WSU Extension, Native Salvage Plant Foundation, groundskeeping staff and three volunteers, the MRC installed a new rain garden at the Old Alcohol Plant Inn in Port Hadlock



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Island County – Elsa Schwartz

- The MRC hosted a Forage Fish class for the South Whidbey School District.
- The MRC had a table at the Penn Cove Water Festival.

San Juan County – Christina Koons

- The spring Great Islands Cleanup event was held on April 22nd. This year a total of 301 people collected 4,574 pounds of litter on Shaw, Orcas, San Juan, Stuart, Decatur, Sucia, and Lopez Islands
- There was no May MRC meeting and instead MRC members attended the boat-based Salmon Recovery site visits on May 4th. This year they visited shoreline armor sites on Lopez and Orcas.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The MRC hosted an Earth Day event on April 22 in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers and Tulalip Tribes. This cleanup utilized the Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol and was held at Mission Beach. Around 30 volunteers were in attendance and a total of 145 lbs of trash was removed from the beach.
- The crabber subcommittee and members of the Oil Spill subcommittee decided again to do crabber outreach. for the first two weekends of crabbing at the Everett Marina. In addition to handing out crabber information and supplies the committee will add oil spill kits donated by Washington Sea Grant and Snohomish County oil spill phone number magnets. The subcommittee is also developing a short survey of yes/no questions to get a bit more information from the public on crab pot loss/prevention of loss.
- A college intern has been hired by Snohomish County to assist the Marine Program this summer. The intern will start in June.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert (not present, written from MRC Report)

- Salish Sea Stewards Social and Data Sharing Event held May 9th at Padilla Bay. It was a great turnout with around 35-40 in attendance. Five speakers presented some of the data that volunteers have been collecting on forage fish, bull kelp, March Point Heronry, beach seining, intertidal monitoring, etc. Presentations were followed by a potluck social.
- Shoreline Landowner Workshop held April 29th at Seafarer's Memorial Park in Anacortes. Excellent presentations by Herrera and Nickel Brothers! Although it was a low turnout with only around 15 shoreline property owners in attendance, they were all engaged and



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asked a lot of great questions. Several were from the same neighborhood and were interested in getting a technical site visit.

Whatcom – Austin Rose

- Staff are working to organize a MRC retreat in late September early October. Triangle Associates (formally Veda Environmental) is available and interested in facilitating.
- The MRC will work with David Wallin, Western Washington University, to conduct eelgrass surveys by drone several times throughout the summer to quantify/ photo document the eelgrass coverage and potential damage that may occur as a result of boat use in Wildcat Cove, Larrabee State Park. In addition, DNR will be conducting a survey in late August, and will attempt to complete 3m transects in the focus zone around the Wildcat Cove boat launch, and 10m transects in the rest of the cove out to where vegetation is not detected (deep water zone).
- The annual Olympia oyster survey in N. Chuckanut Bay occurred on May 8 and May 10 with the help of two different groups of students enrolled in the Bellingham Technical College Fisheries and Aquaculture Program. Very few LIVE Olympia oysters were found within the test plots. The MRC is considering abandoning the pilot restoration project in N. Chuckanut Bay and transitioning their efforts to Drayton Harbor. The success of Oly oyster restoration efforts in Drayton led by the Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) is visible. Brian Allan, PSRF, will be joining the June MRC meeting to discuss their work in Drayton and ways the MRC could consider adding to the project.

Meeting Highlights and Action Items:

The Commission identified the following key highlights:

- The next Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council meeting is June 7-8 at the LOTT Clean Water Alliance in Olympia. One topic on the Leadership Council agenda is the trend in declining shellfish bed in Puget Sound. This topic will be from 9:20-10:00 on June 7. The Alliance for a Healthy South Sound will follow that up with a local forum from 10:15-12:15 that will cover shellfish beds and nutrient management. The meeting will be streamed on TVW. Click [here](#) for the link to watch the meeting.
- The NW Straits Foundation is hosting a 20th year anniversary event at Jerry Masters' house on June 10 from 2-6 p.m. Contact Brooke Friesen friesen@nwstraitsfoundation.org for information.
- Due to boat launch design, boaters launching at Larrabee State Park in Whatcom County drive over critical eelgrass habitat at lower tides. The Whatcom MRC is working with WWU professor David Wallin to assess damage caused by boat launch use in the area.



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- The Canadian federal government approved the Roberts Bank container terminal expansion. This project is expected to have direct impacts on Salish Sea species, as the port is in a critical habitat for Southern Resident Orca Whales and Chinook salmon.
- Four representatives from the NW Straits Initiative attended Puget Sound Day on the Hill in Washington DC. Northwest Straits Commission reauthorization was one of three priorities at this year's event. Reauthorization includes federal appropriations. Senator Murray is committed to working on reauthorization. Senator Cantwell plans to co-sponsor. Attendees also held meetings with Representative Larsen, Representative Kilmer, and with staff from Representative Schrier and DelBene's offices. Representative Larsen was asked to sponsor a House companion reauthorization bill. He is reviewing the Senate reauthorization bill to gain a better understanding of the legislation. Governor Jay Inslee's staff has offered to write a letter of support for reauthorization.

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Public Comment:

Julia shared that the UW College of the Environment was successful in recruiting Dr. Corey Garza as the Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. He is a marine ecologist and is developing programs to further diversify programs at UW and Friday Harbor Labs.

Lucas commented on the Roberts Bank terminal project. He suggested that individuals take a look at the project as it is occurring a large Salish Sea estuary.

Don is recruiting board members for the NW Straits Foundation and is looking to fill three-year terms that start October 1, 2023.

Jeff shared that Jefferson County MRC has created a subgroup to get student representation on the MRC.

*The next meeting will be the Northwest Straits Commission meeting June 23, 2023, on Lopez Island at Odlin County Park the Grace Episcopal Church.



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**June 23, 2023 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
In-Person Meeting, Lopez Island
Northwest Straits Commission meeting**

Attendees:

Commission Members: Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Ginny Broadhurst, Christina Koons (San Juan), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Elsa Schwartz (Island), Ahren Stroming (Puget Sound Partnership), Nan McKay, Tom Cowan, Julia Parrish, Diane Hennebert (Skagit)

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

Others in Attendance: Mike MacKay (San Juan – Alternate), Karin Roemers-Klevin (San Juan), Sam Whitridge (San Juan County), Craig Smith (San Juan MRC), Jamie Stephens, Jane Fuller

Absent: Cecilia Gobin (NWIFC), Bob Cecile (Whatcom)

Welcome and Introductions: Tim Ellis led introductions and shared the Tribal Acknowledgement. Tom Cowan introduced San Juan Councilmember Jane Fuller.

MRC Presentations: The San Juan County MRC welcomed us with two presentations from MRC Staff member Sam Whitridge, and NW Straits Commission representative Christina Koons.

Sam presented at Odlin County Park where there is an eelgrass protection zone in place. Sam shared about the installation of the anchor out buoys at Odlin County Park, which occurred in February 2021. The buoys were placed to protect fragile eelgrass habitats from the impacts of recreational boat anchoring. MRC members conduct regular vessel monitoring at Odlin to observe how the anchor-out zone has impacted boating behavior at the park. In the first two years since the anchor out zone was installed, MRC members have observed no boats anchoring inside of the protection zone, which indicates the anchor-out zone has been effective. Eelgrass protection zones are being monitored around the county through the summer of 2023. Monitoring is also taking place at proposed protection areas like Eastsound, Blind Bay, and Bell Point.

Christina presented on the Dock Talks taking place summer of 2023 at the Port of Friday Harbor and Roche Harbor. A sign board illustrates the MRC logo, Be Whale Wise information, and the Whale Warning Flag is offered for free. If boaters see the flag, they are to slow to less than 7knts to reduce noise. Boaters must stay 400 yards out and turn off fish finders and depth sounders. The Whale Warning Flag began as a San Juan County MRC project in 2018. Since that time thousands



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of flags have been distributed, and the Be Whale Wise information has spread widely throughout the Salish Sea.

Christina mentioned the San Juan County Council wrote to the Honorable David Eby, Premier of British Columbia, with concerns about the Roberts Bank Terminal approval and the long term environmental and shipping mishap risks. The letter also requests a dedicated ETV (Emergency Towing Vehicle) be stationed in Sidney, British Columbia.

Christina shared that MRC members and San Juan County marine program staff lobbied successfully with Representative Debra Lekanoff for the passage of ESSB 537. It provides additional vessel related protections for Southern Resident killer Whales. By January 2025 recreational boats will be required to stay 1000 yards away from the whales. Frances Robertson (SJC Marine Project Manager) and Lovel Pratt (MRC member) attended the bill's signing by Governor Inslee.

Business Items:

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

Kelp Plan Summary: Staff finished the draft 2020-2023 Kelp Plan Summary Report, which consists of a synthesis of the advances, lessons learned, and next steps of the actions within the Kelp Plan since its publication. The draft will undergo an open input period by a wide audience, including MRCs, in July before final publication.

Communications Plan: Jessica is working on the communications plan, google analytics, and is calling on NW Straits Commission members to share with her where they get their news and information for crowdsourcing purposes.

MRC Lead Staff Meeting Update: Lucas shared about the MRC and NW Straits Commission staff meeting held on June 12, 2023. A key discussion was around NWS Initiative-wide communication. Lucas is in conversation with Don and MRC staff members to have quarterly meetings to coordinate and bridge communication gaps, and to fill the desire to get together more frequently.

Kelp Indicator Data: Dana presented on the work of creating a floating kelp indicator in WA State. WA Department of Natural Resources, and NW Straits Commission staff and MRCs, alongside a diverse coalition of partners worked together to weave multiple data sources into one cohesive



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and first-of-its kind indicator of trends in canopy forming kelp in Washington state. Indicators are used as part of the Puget Sound Partnership's Vital Signs program to inform science and management actions. The newly developed indicator demonstrates an approach to working with different methods of monitoring and different ways of knowing to create a cohesive floating kelp indicator. Data sets include 17 MRC kelp kayak sites and DNR led monitoring via kayak and aerial surveys, along with local ecological knowledge and Indigenous sciences. To learn more about this project, visit this [link](#).

Committee Reports:

Executive Committee: Alan shared that the Committee discussed strategies for improving Northwest Straits Commission, Foundation, and MRC communications.

External Relations Committee: Nan reported on the follow-up she is doing with Senator Murray, Senator Cantwell, and Congressman Larson after Puget Sound Day on the Hill. Congressman Larson has agreed to lead a NW Straits Commission reauthorization bill in the House of Representatives.

Ahren is working on a summary of the key themes and next steps from the from Puget Sound Day on the Hill, which will be available for public review next month.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia shared that the Committee is working through reading MRC project proposals. The Committee is meeting on June 29, 2023 where they will review and provide recommendations and feedback to MRCs. The Committee is looking forward to working more directly with the MRCs.

Partner Updates:

Puget Sound Partnership: Ahren shared with the group that there have been challenges and barriers in accessing state and local grant funds. In response, the Partnership is creating a strategic funding team to reduce the barriers for applying to grants. Ahren shared that the Puget Sound Partnership is hiring new staff for their strategic funding team and are working on a website for Progress Indicators. The Partnership is scoping and developing Progress Indicators in collaboration with local, state and Tribal partners. To learn more about the Progress Indicators, visit this [link](#).



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MRC Updates:

Clallam - Alan Clark

- Continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Three Olympia oyster surveys have occurred.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC onboarded three interns (MRC Assistant, Crabber Outreach Coordinator, and Rain Garden Community Coordinator) in mid-late May who have already accomplished a ton of work in a short amount of time. The MRC has finalized interviews and has offered a fourth internship (Storm Surge Monitoring Program Coordinator).
- The MRC completed contracted side scan sonar surveys on May 23 and 24 and began ROV derelict crab pot removal operations in a portion of Port Townsend Bay the week of June 6-13, recovering a total of 13 pots. Removal operations will resume on closed dates of the recreational crabbing season.
- The MRC conducted an Olympia oyster population survey on June 5 at the North and partial South Powerlines Sites in Discovery Bay with the help of community volunteers. Results show a nice bell curve, indicating a healthy population with continued recruitment; average density of 324 Olympia oysters per square meter; and an estimated total population of 123,000 individual Olympia oysters.

Island County – Elsa Schwartz

- White paper – SLR/Resiliency
- Cornet Bay and Hoypus Point Stewardship Event

San Juan County – Christina Koons

- The San Juan MRC was represented at the bill signing ceremony with Governor Inlslee on May 15th as he signed ESSB 5371
- The ECB Local forum was a great success, with MRC members presenting about oil spill risk and prevention, including the increased importance of a transboundary emergency response towing vessel (ERTV), as well as supporting increased protection of marine habitats for threatened and endangered species from vessel traffic impacts.



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- The June MRC meeting was held in person at the San Juan Island Grange and included a cake break to celebrate the ending term of two long-time members: Phil Green and Megan Dethier.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- Snohomish County and the MRC welcomed their Marine Ecology Intern Ariel Shiley. Ariel will work on a variety of projects throughout this summer.
- Crabber outreach is scheduled for the first two weekends of crabber season at the Everett Marina 10th street boat launch.
- The Snohomish MRC in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers and City of Everett is hosting a post-4th-of-July breach clean up on Jetty Island on July 7th.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- Bowman Bay Work Party: Skagit MRC and NWSF co-hosted a plant maintenance kick-off event at Bowman Bay on June 15th combined with a forage fish spawning survey and nearshore monitoring. There was an article about the event in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#).
- School Rain Garden: Partnered with the Skagit Watershed Council's Drain Ranger Program to present to two different classes at the Mount Erie Rain Garden in Anacortes including hands-on stormwater science activities for students and a demonstration of how rain gardens work.

Whatcom – Mike MacKay

- Brian Allan, Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF), joined the June MRC meeting and provided insight on the pilot Olympia oyster project in N. Chuckanut Bay and the potential of continuing restoration in Drayton Harbor. There is a need to gather basic information to identify test plot locations in Drayton, which may include the inside of Semiahmoo Spit and the tide waters of California Creek.

Minute Approval: The Commission moved to approve the May meeting minutes.

Meeting Highlights and Action Items:

The Commission identified the following key highlights:

- Ahren shared that the Puget Sound Partnership is hiring new staff for their strategic funding team and are working on a website for Progress Indicators. The Partnership is



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scoping and developing Progress Indicators in collaboration with local, state and Tribal partners. To learn more about the Progress Indicators, visit this [link](#).

- Dana presented on the Floating Kelp Indicator. To read more about this project, visit this [link](#).
- San Juan MRC has been holding talks about responsible fueling and best practices for recreational boating.
- Staff finished the draft of the 2020-2023 Kelp Plan Summary Report, which consists of a synthesis of the advances, lessons learned, and next steps of the actions within the Kelp Plan since its publication. The draft will undergo an open comment period by a wide audience, including the MRCs, in July before final publication.
- Councilmember Jane Fuller shared with the group about the vital roadways in San Juan County, and the affects sea level rise may have on these roadways. She is interested in discussing further about mitigation strategies and solutions with the San Juan MRC and NW Straits Commission.

Round Table:

- Allie shared the importance of the European Green Crab molt search survey courses, and the benefits courses give NW Straits and MRC staff and members for identifying Green Crab molts.
- Jeff shared that Jefferson County MRC is transitioning to hybrid meetings to accommodate all members of the MRC.
- Elsa wants to explore oyster recycling as a method of obtaining shells for oyster restoration.
- Sasha shared there are more opportunities for communications and outreach between members of the NW Straits Commission, MRCs, NW Straits Foundation and the public now that Jessica is beginning to work on analytics and the communications plan for the NW Straits Initiative.
- Alan shared his thanks about being in San Juan County and opening his eyes to the high number of boaters that use the area for recreation, fishing, subsistence purposes, and more.
- Ginny shared that the Kelp Canopy Indicator is especially inclusive of Indigenous Knowledge. This project sparked her interest in scheduling a webinar about the Robert's Bank terminal.
- Diane shared that she is looking forward to Skagit County hosting the next NW Straits Commission meeting on July 28.



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- Nan shared her gratitude for the accomplishments of the San Juan County MRC that Christina and Sam shared in their presentations, as well as Initiative-wide accomplishments.
- Ahren is interested in learning more about the roads and infrastructure along shoreline after Councilmember Jane Fuller mentioned the impacts of sea level rise on roads like the one near Crescent Beach on Orcas Island.
- Christina thanked everyone for attending the meeting.
- Lucas thanked everyone and mentioned that Dana, Sasha, and Allie are working on selecting and contracting with a social marketing consultant to develop a social marketing campaign and toolkit to support voluntary no-anchor zones.
- Tim thanked the San Juan County MRC for their presentations and hosting the June Commission meeting.

Public Comment

- Jamie shared, with reference to vessel traffic, Haro Strait in San Juan County, and Turn Point in particular, is heavily used for tanker traffic, difficult to navigate and the most likely site of an incident or spill. Cost and responsibility are creating a challenge with US based shipping companies when discussing the posting of an additional Emergency Response Towing Vessel (ERTV) near Haro Strait because an estimated 70% of ships are coming to or from Canada. It might be reasonable for a Canadian ERTV to be stationed in Sydney, BC to support an appropriate response time near Haro Strait.
- Councilmember Jane Fuller shared that as a councilmember, she is proud of the work she is doing with San Juan County on local marine policy.

*The next meeting is in person at Padilla Bay on July 28, 2023



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July 28, 2023 10:00 AM-3:00 PM
10441 Bayview Edison Road, Mount Vernon, Padilla Bay Reserve
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Ginny Broadhurst, Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Tom Cowan, Elsa Schwartz (Island), Nan McKay, Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Laura Blackmore, Julia Parrish

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

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger, Ron Wesen (County Commissioner), Jen Johnson (Skagit), Jodie Toft (Puget Sound Restoration Fund), Hilary Hayford (Puget Sound Restoration Fund), Pete Haase, Craig Smith (San Juan)

Absent: Alan Clark (Clallam), Cecilia Gobin, Christina Koons (San Juan)

Welcome and Introductions: Tim welcomed the group with introductions and the tribal acknowledgement.

The Commission approved the June Commission meeting minutes by consensus.

Pete Haase, Skagit MRC and Padilla Bay Foundation board member welcomed Commissioners and attendees to the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Remarks from County Commissioner Ron Wesen: Commissioner Ron Wesen shared his thanks to the Commission for inviting him to attend this meeting. He shared that he has been a Commissioner in Skagit County for 15 years, and he is proud to support the NW Straits Commission, Skagit MRC, and the partnerships that have been fostered during his time as a County Commissioner.

Skagit MRC Presentation: Diane Hennebert with the Skagit MRC presented on the MRC's Mt. Erie Elementary School Rain Garden. This project connected many partners such as the NW Straits Foundation, Boeing, the Anacortes School District, and others to implement a rain garden at Mt. Erie elementary school. Diane shared the process of what the implementation looked like, from excavation with the City of Anacortes, to the planting party with Azusa Garden Centre and the NW Straits Foundation. Diane also worked with the Skagit Watershed Council to coordinate education and outreach for the students at Mt. Erie elementary school. Diane mentioned that some of the lessons learned from this project included improving communication with the school district maintenance staff and to set up a regular volunteer schedule to keep up with the long-



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term care of the rain garden. Overall, Diane shared that the work was worth seeing the community of students that came together to participate in a project that allowed them to be outside the classroom.

For more information about the Mt. Erie elementary school rain garden, contact Diane Hennebert (diane@cityofanacortes.org) and see the link to the presentation here: ([Mt. Erie Rain Garden Presentation](#))

Business Items:

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

Introducing Antonio as our new Veterans Conservation Corps/Marine Nearshore Tech: We welcome Antonio back as the VCC/Marine Nearshore Tech and we are looking forward to his return on staff at the NW Straits Commission.

Green crab outreach and trapping efforts: Allie updated the group on the ongoing European green crab outreach and trapping efforts. Allie participated in a local radio interview with Skagit Talks where she highlighted the impacts the WCC Crew has had on trapping efforts and the experiences they gained through being part of invasive species trapping and removal. Link to Allie's interview here: ([Skagit Valley College Community Radio Archive \(ksvr.org\)](#)). The episode is from Thursday July 6, 2023.

Allie and Leah shared the work that the NW Straits Commission has been participating in for green crab trapping efforts with the multi-agency coordination group. This was the first time they presented to this group.

Recently, the NW Straits Commission worked with the Skagit MRC on creating an outreach letter that targets landowners. The letter was sent to 500 landowners in Skagit County who own shoreline in Fidalgo Bay, Samish Bay, and on the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community's reservation. Nine people from the Skagit MRC, Taylor Shellfish, Samish Indian Nation, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Washington Sea Grant, WA Department of Natural Resources, and the NW Straits Commission collectively signed the letter, which came with outreach cards. A special thanks to Lynne Wenberg Davidson with the Skagit MRC and her great work assisting with the outreach to landowners.

Allie also shared that WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has created green crab outreach materials in Spanish that are available upon request. Please contact Allie Simpson (simpson@nwstraits.org) if you would like these materials.



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Leah updated the NW Straits Commission on the number of green crabs caught. The NW Straits Commission has caught 11 in Chuckanut Bay, 15 in Birch Bay, 103 in Drayton Harbor, and 107 in Samish Bay. All green crab caught are frozen and sent to WA Sea Grant for research purposes.

MRC Grant Update: Sasha shared that the grant timeline is on schedule. Since the last NW Straits Commission meeting in June, we have submitted comments to the MRCs regarding their grant proposals for the next two-year cycle. MRCs are in the process of meeting with Sasha and Dana to discuss the remaining logistics and follow up questions, and Sasha will be compiling agreements for the \$192,000 that each MRC will receive per year for the next two years. This includes funding from EPA via the Puget Sound Partnership, and state funding from the 2023-25 biennium. For the NW Straits Commission meeting in August, all project proposals will be shared for review and approval by the Commission. Another set of grant agreements will follow to award NOAA funding to MRCs from the second round of Congressionally Directed Spending.

Derelict Vessel Update: Dana shared with the group that Congressionally Directed Spending funds are being used in 2023 to do derelict vessel removal. Derelict vessel removal at the NW Straits Commission was made possible through an interagency agreement with WA Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and a workgroup developed with tribal partners and all seven MRCs. To date, DNR has removed 9 out of 11 vessels prioritized by the workgroup. The remaining two on the list are scheduled for removal in August. One of the removed vessels, the Windjammer, was blocking the intertidal zone where the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community would like to install another clam garden. Jessica Owens created a video to showcase the importance of the removal of the Windjammer vessel. See the link here to the video: ([Windjammer Vessel Removal July 2023](#)).

DRAFT

Forage Fish Survey Training: Leah shared that Kate Olson and Phill Dionne from WDFW are hosting a Forage Fish Training on August 30 at Padilla Bay Reserve in the Stevens Center. The training will teach new volunteers about the program and protocols, and current volunteers are encouraged to attend as well. To sign up for this training, please use the following link: [Forage Fish Survey Training sign-up](#). Contact Leah Robison (robison@nwstraits.org) for more information.

Committee Reports:

Executive Committee: Lucas shared that the Executive Committee recommended adoption of the Marine Program Description. The Committee also discussed strategic planning and recommended formation of an ad hoc strategic planning committee. Lucas noted that a joint staff meeting for the NW Straits Commission, NW Straits Foundation, and MRCs will be held on September 6 at the Padilla Bay Stevens Center.



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The NW Straits Commission discussed adoption of the proposed Marine Program Description. Tom Cowan noted the importance of the description for the future of collaboration within the NW Straits Initiative. The NW Straits Commission approved the Marine Program Description by consensus with the request that language be added to acknowledge coordination with partners such as the NW Straits Foundation.

External Relations Committee: Nan shared that the Committee continues to prioritize efforts to move forward with reauthorization and appropriations. The Committee is hoping Senator Cantwell will co-sponsor the reauthorization bill with Senator Murray.

The Committee is working on planning for Senator Patty Murray's visit the first week of August. Senator Murray is planning to do a site visit to Lone Tree at Swinomish on August 7. She is interested in hearing about the collaborative efforts between Swinomish Tribal Community and Skagit MRC.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia reported that the Committee met on June 29 at the University of WA in Seattle for an initial meeting to provide feedback on MRC project proposals. Julia shared that she is looking forward to the ways the Committee can assist MRC and NW Straits Commission staff with restructuring project reports to establish a simpler process for reporting on the projects. The Committee reviewed 15 proposals out of the total 46 that were submitted.

Speed Date with a Scientist – Eyes on Kelp: Puget Sound Restoration Fund

Jodie Toft and Hilary Hayford from the Puget Sound Restoration Fund presented on an initiative titled "Eyes on Kelp", which establishes bull kelp enhancement tools to continue monitoring and growing bull kelp in WA State. Bull kelp enhancement has been a vital tool for resource managers to consider the next steps in kelp conservation. This project began with a concern about bull kelp, as it is the only canopy forming kelp located inland in WA State.

In partnership with NOAA, MRCs, tribal nations, universities, the NW Straits Initiative, and other state agencies, the Puget Sound Restoration Fund initiated this project to connect existing work around kelp conservation and to expand the reach of current canopy kelp-focused projects. Index sites have been set up throughout the southern Salish Sea, establishing buoys with monitoring equipment, as well as annual scuba surveys of the index sites. The PSRF is hoping for this project to expand across transboundary waters into the northern Salish Sea in British Columbia. For more information on the "Eyes on Kelp" Initiative, please contact Jodie Toft



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(jodie@restorationfund.org) or Hilary Hayford (hilary@restorationfund.org) and see the link to the slides for their presentation: ([Link to PSRF Presentation here](#)).

Partner Updates:

Puget Sound Partnership: Laura shared that the House bill for appropriations has allocated \$54 million for the Puget Sound Geographic Program. She also mentioned that the Senate bill has \$57 million for Puget Sound Geographic Program. Laura shared that the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund has appropriations at \$65 million.

NW Straits Foundation: Don shared that the Foundation has pulled a total of 550 derelict crab pots. Don, Brooke, Sasha, and Jessica met about communications and how to enhance the NW Straits Foundation's reach to the public. Don shared that the Clayton Beach project is in the scoping phase, and they are getting support from the Samish Indian Nation. This will be one of the largest shoreline projects in Puget Sound with around 1,200 feet of shoreline restoration projected. As the project moves to the construction phase, there will be room for partners to get involved with the project.

MRC Updates:

Clallam – from MRC Report

- Continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Elwha Beach surveys are randomly occurring. These surveys are documenting people/dog use as well as counting dog waste not in CMRC's provided waste can.
- Shellfish biotoxin surveys happen bi-monthly.
- Sound Toxin training was attended by 2 MRC members. The sampling training was held at Feiro Marine Life Center.
- New outreach coasters were designed and ordered.

Island County – Elsa Schwartz

- Working on a white paper on sea level rise and resiliency
- Shore Friendly Outreach continues

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC contracted Hood Canal Oyster Company to deliver 1,200 bags of clean Pacific oyster shell to the Powerlines Site in South Discovery Bay. With just one workday, about half of the bags are now emptied. We anticipate just one or two more workdays to finalize spreading shell here and look forward to next year's population survey.



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- The MRC conducted its first kelp linear extent survey, spanning from Beckett Point in Discovery Bay to Point Hudson, along the north and east shores of Marrowstone Island, and through the Port Townsend Ship Canal, documenting bull kelp beds that are not recorded in the WA DNR Marine Vegetation Atlas.
- The ROV derelict crab pot removal team resumed removal operations on July 11, 12, and 19, recovering a total of 16 pots to date and training new robotics students on operating the ROV in marine waters.

San Juan County – Craig Smith

- The MRC has recommended Dave Checkley to join the Committee. Dave's background as a biological and fisheries oceanographer and professor at the Scripps Institute makes him a desirable candidate to join the MRC.
- Plastic Free July is underway with the launch of Adopt-a-Road, sister program, to Adopt-a-Beach, unleashing a public plastic film recycling bin at the local market, and a social media campaign to highlight the importance of reducing plastic consumption.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The story map for the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area is complete. Next the Snohomish MRC webpages will be updated, and the story map added.
- Crabber and oil spill outreach occurred on July 1-2 and 8-9 at the Everett Marina. Volunteers reached 554 people and handed out both crabber gear and oil spill kits.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- European Green Crab outreach letters and rack cards have been mailed to 505 Samish and Padilla Bays shoreline property owners in collaboration with 8 organizations and tribes.
- MRC-Salish Sea School Intern, Dana Flerchinger and four students grades 7th-12th, are collecting forage fish survey data at 3 locations at the Fidalgo Bay Resort through Sept. They are finding lots of eggs so far including some mystery eggs they hope to identify.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- Peak Sustainability has been hired as the social marketing campaign consultant for eelgrass preservation in Wildcat Cove in Larrabee State Park. MRC staff and Peak Sustainability had their kick-off meeting on July 13th and will be working together closely on the project.
- Western Washington University began drone surveys in Wildcat Cove on July 14th and will continue monthly flights through September to assess potential changes to eelgrass meadows throughout the summer.



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Round Table: Time was allotted for the Commission round table.

Public Comment: No public comment

*The next meeting will be held virtually on August 25, 2023.



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August 25 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Tim Ellis (Snohomish -Chair), Alan Clark (Clallam- Vice Chair), Tom Cowan, Nan McKay, Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Christina Koons (San Juan), Cecilia Gobin (NWIFC)

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

Others in Attendance: Rep. Debra Lekanoff (40th District Representative), Monica Montgomery (Jefferson), Austin Rose (Whatcom)

Absent: Ginny Broadhurst, Elsa Schwartz (Island), Julia Parrish

Welcome and Introductions: Tim opened the meeting with introductions and the tribal acknowledgement.

The Commission approved the July Commission meeting minutes by consensus.

The Commission approved the previously distributed May and April Commission meeting minutes by consensus.

Remarks from 40th District Representative Debra Lekanoff:

Tom Cowan introduced 40th District Representative Debra Lekanoff.

Debra Lekanoff shared her appreciation for the NW Straits Commission, and honored Terry Williams who introduced her to the NW Straits Commission. She expressed her ongoing support in the legislature for salmon and natural resource conservation issues.

Committee Reports:

Executive Committee: Alan shared that the Committee discussed holding a joint meeting between the NW Straits Foundation and NW Straits Commission Executive Committees to talk about collaboration and the relationship between the two organizations. Don and Lucas are working together to create a plan for the meeting.

The Executive Committee recommended to the Commission that a new annual award be established in the name of Senator Patty Murray. An ad-hoc committee would be formed to name



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the award and outline a selection process. The award would be presented at the annual conference. The Commission supported moving forward with the award by consensus.

Science Advisory Committee: Dana updated the Commission in Julia's absence. The Committee had a meeting on July 30. Tessa Francis, a member of the Committee since 2015, received a new position as Chief of Staff for the US National Nature Assessment for Biden administration, and will not be serving on the Committee once her position begins. The Committee discussed previous member nominations and will be extending invitations to those previously nominated in 2024. The Committee has also been reviewing Speed Date with A Scientist topics for 2024.

External Relations Committee: Nan shared that the Committee is focused on reauthorizing the Northwest Straits Initiative. Senator Cantwell appears supportive of the bill. The Committee is awaiting her formal support. At that point, Senator Murray would like to introduce the bill. They are aiming to introduce the bill in mid-September. Congressman Larsen is prepared to introduce a companion bill in the House. Don Hunger and the NWS Foundation hosted a recent visit to Clayton Beach by Congressman Rick Larsen.

Business Items:

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

Conference Planning Update: Caitlyn updated the group that the NW Straits Initiative conference registration will open on August 30. She reminded the group that this Conference is not an open invitation to spouses or family members.

DEI Update: Allie shared that the NW Straits Commission is moving forward with efforts to hire a DEI consultant to assist with an internal assessment of the NW Straits Initiative.

Senator Murray Visit: In early August, Senator Murray visited Lone Tree Point to learn about MRC-Swinomish Indian Tribal Community collaborations. Commission members, staff, and partners joined the visit. Lucas gave thanks to everyone who attended and assisted with planning.

Social Marketing for Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: Sasha shared that the contract has been sent out to be signed with Peak Sustainability Group who will help develop a social marketing toolkit to share with partners and MRCs.

2023-2025 MRC Grant Approval:



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Sasha shared the list of MRC projects that will be funded with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Washington state general fund dollars. Sasha asked for official approval to move forward with these projects, along with approval to make some minor adjustments as final project details are collected. Another grant will be going to MRCs using the NOAA congressionally directed spending from fiscal year 2023. Additional projects will be proposed with that source of funding.

The Commission approved the 2023-2025 MRC grant proposals and future adjustments by consensus.

Partner Updates:

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia shared with the group that the NW Indian Fisheries Commission and partnering tribes are watching for reauthorization updates and will provide input when the time is right. Cecilia is working with Lucas to formalize her tribal appointment seat on the NW Straits Commission. They are also talking about a second tribal seat. Cecilia and Lucas drafted a letter to the Secretary of Interior for her appointment. Cecilia plans to share the letter at the September NW Indian Fisheries Commission meeting for approval.

MRC Reports:

Clallam – Alan Clark

- Continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches
- Elwha Beach surveys are randomly occurring. These surveys are documenting people/dog use as well as counting dog waste not in CMRC's provided waste can.
- Shellfish biotoxin surveys happen bi-monthly during the summer months.
- Sound Toxin sampling is taking place once a week.
- New outreach coasters have been received and MRC members are distributing them to local businesses.
- Kayak based kelp surveys took place August 14 & 15.

Jefferson – Monica Montgomery

- The MRC organized a shell spread workday on July 31 and with the help of five community volunteers, the MRC Coordinator, and two MRC members (Neil and Gordon), we distributed shell from the remainder of the 1,200 bags delivered to the Powerlines restoration site in Discovery Bay.
- The MRC, with help of the rain garden intern, organized rain garden maintenance work parties at the NW Maritime Center on August 1 and the Jefferson County Courthouse on August 10, created a [Story Map](#) featuring the MRC's network of 18 rain gardens, and



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posted ads in the local newspapers to encourage community members to steward or “adopt” a rain garden.

- The MRC is actively recruiting new members: District 1 Representative/Alternate, District 3 Representative/Alternate, and Marine Science Research and Education Representative/Alternate.

Island – Taken from Report

- Shore Friendly Outreach – This month we chose the contractor that we want to move forward with for the shoreline armoring survey. We are now in the process with Island County to get the contract approved and signed. Our hope is to begin the survey by September 1.
- Stewardship at Cornet Bay and Hoypus Point – We hosted our third stewardship event of the summer. Cornet Bay is looking good overall. We removed some vetch and trailing blackberry at Hoypus point that was encroaching on our new plantings. The survival rate is high so far. Watering at both places is taking place weekly.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- The SJC MRC has a brand-new blog – Currents! This will be a light, fun way to connect with the community and share the stories of the projects the MRC is working on. Check it out [here](#).
- Summertime outreach on Plastic Free Salish Sea initiatives have gone well with tabling at the county fair and launch of plastic film recycling bin pilot at the local grocery.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The Port Susan subcommittee met on August 14 and reviewed the webpage updates. The final webpage and story map will be announced in a September press release.
- The MRC had their annual picnic on August 16 at the Mukilteo Lighthouse Park. Everyone enjoyed the social time and the sunny weather.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- The Foundation and MRC hosted a compost and mulching event at Bowman Bay on August 3. The plants are looking much better with weekly watering. The October 12 MRC meeting will be combined with a planting party at Bowman Bay.
- The bay-wide Olympia oyster population survey which takes place every 5 years in Fidalgo Bay is now complete. There was a [recent article](#) in the Skagit Valley Herald.
- Skagit MRC formed a subcommittee to develop a strategic plan for expanding our MRC membership and filling diversity and representation gaps. The subcommittee will hold it’s first meeting in October.



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Whatcom – Austin Rose

- The MRC is drafting a letter to the Birch Bay community as more European green crab have been found in that area. The intent of the letter is to keep the public informed on how to identify and report an EGC sighting.
- The MRC retreat has been scheduled for October 21, 9-1 PM at the Squalicum Boathouse. The retreat will be facilitated by Hilary Wilkinson, Triangle Associates.

Public Comment: No public comment.



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**September 29, 2023 10:00 AM-3:00 PM
Coupeville Library, 788 NW Alexander St., Coupeville
Northwest Straits Commission meeting**

Attendees:

Commission Members: Tom Cowan, Ginny Broadhurst, Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Christina Koons (San Juan), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Cecilia Gobin (NWIFC), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Alan Clark (Clallam), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Elsa Schwartz (Island)

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

Others in Attendance: Kelly Zupich, Barbara Bennett, Island County Commissioner Melanie Bacon, Jill Lipoti, Ken Collins, Jerry Masters, Lisa Kaufman

Absent: Julia Parrish, Nan McKay, Laura Blackmore

Welcome and Introductions: Tim welcomed the group with introductions and the Tribal Acknowledgement.

The Commission approved the August Commission meeting minutes by consensus.

Remarks from Island County Commissioner Melanie Bacon: Elsa Schwartz introduced Commissioner Melanie Bacon. Commissioner Bacon serves District 1 in Island County. She shared that Island County Commissioners passed the Climate Resiliency Resolution, which was proposed by a group of students called the United Student Leaders. Island County is currently working on updating their comprehensive plan, due by June, 2025.

Roberts Bank Terminal 2 Presentation: Ginny Broadhurst presented on Roberts Bank Terminal 2, a future marine container terminal on Canada’s west coast, led by the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority. For more information, watch the recording from her presentation with colleagues Dr. Moscato and Dr. Baloy [here](#).

Island County MRC Presentation: Barbara Bennett and Jill Lipoti of Island County MRC presented on the Climate Change White Paper and their new water quality project. County Commissioners requested input from Island County, and the MRC responded with a White Paper that is currently in draft stage. The biggest recommendation from the MRC was to focus on extreme events and predictive models in planning policy and regulations. For more information, please reach out to Kelly Zupich (K.Zupich@islandcountywa.gov).

Business Items:



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Staff provided updates on the following business items:

Patty Murray Legacy Award: Lucas shared that the Executive Committee approved the formation of this annual award to be presented at the NW Straits Initiative conference. An ad-hoc committee was established to decide on the name of the award. Lucas is awaiting a response from Senator Murray's staff about their input on the name of the award.

November Conference Registration: Caitlyn shared an update on the NWSI annual conference on November 3-4 at the NW Maritime Center in Port Townsend. This is an invitation only event. For questions about the conference, please e-mail Caitlyn Blair (blair@nwstraits.org).

2024 Commission Meeting Schedule: Caitlyn shared the draft 2024 NW Straits Commission meeting schedule. The Commission approved the schedule by consensus, with the condition to revise the back-to-back retreat dates. The executive committee plans to discuss the retreat at their October meeting.

Recognition Certificates: Jessica made a recognition certificate to appreciate Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Chairman Ron Allen for opening the NW Straits Initiative Conference. All Commission members will sign the recognition award, and he will be presented with the certificate at the NW Straits Initiative conference.

Revisiting the Tribal Acknowledgement: Lucas and Cecilia Gobin shared the history of the establishment of the tribal acknowledgement in 2021 to honor the collaboration between the NW Straits Commission and tribal partners across the Puget Sound. The NW Straits Commission staff have expressed interest in adding three additional tribes to the tribal acknowledgement. Lucas and Cecilia have discussed this in depth and brought this to the NW Straits Commission for further recommendation. The recommendation by the NW Straits Commission was to consult the Skokomish, Suquamish, Sauk-Suiattle, and Upper Skagit before adding them to the tribal acknowledgement.

Committee Updates:

Science Advisory Committee: Dana shared that David Trimbach is confirmed for re-appointment to the Committee. Tessa Francis has ended her term with the Committee, and Dr. Kathryn Sobocinski will be joining the Committee in January 2024.

Executive Committee: The Committee discussed bringing in Jamestown S'Klallam chair Ron Allen to open the conference, as well as him receiving a recognition certificate. Since the last Committee meeting, Lucas and Cecilia discussed the process of adding an additional tribal seat to



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the NW Straits Commission. Cecilia noted that it might be worth bringing back the Tribal Committee. The Committee will discuss this topic at the November meeting. The Committee also discussed the external funding policy for marine programming.

External Relations: Tom Cowan shared on behalf of Nan McKay. The Committee continues to prioritize reauthorization. Tom shared that membership in the external relations committee has increased over the years.

Partner Updates:

NW Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia shared an update that the NW Straits Commission and the NW Indian Fisheries Commission are writing an official letter to request formal appointment of Cecilia to the NW Straits Commission by the Department of Interior. The letter was approved and highly supported by the NW Indian Fisheries Commission. Cecilia will be returning to this topic at the next NW Indian Fisheries Commission meeting.

NW Straits Foundation: Lisa Kaufman shared on behalf of Don Hunger. Two derelict nets have been removed in the last month, one was in Bellingham Bay, and another was on south San Juan Island. The Catch More Crab campaign is wrapping up for the summer. This program continues to prove its effectiveness with ads reaching people across the Puget Sound, with a lot of MRC engagement. The Bowman Bay Stewardship event on September 22 went well with over 30 attendees celebrating the stewardship work that has taken place there. Orca Recovery week is coming up, beginning October 14. There will be an event at Bowman Bay on October 12 and one at Cornet Bay on October 14 for Orca Recovery Week. The NW Straits Foundation is partnering with Jefferson MRC on October 21 for a shore friendly workshop. For more information about these events, visit the [NW Straits Foundation Website](#).

MRC Reports:

Clallam – Alan Clark

- The MRC has continued forage fish sampling on three beaches.
- The Elwha Beach surveys are randomly occurring and so far, there has been 11 surveys.
- Shellfish biotoxin surveys happen bi-monthly during the summer months.
- Sound Toxin sampling is taking place on Mondays (March-October). They have found the phytoplankton that causes diuretic shellfish poisoning in low numbers.
- A new batch of MRC outreach cards (coasters have been ordered), and local businesses love them.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- At the last MRC meeting on September 5, the MRC decided by consensus to add a local youth (starting age of 15-21 years old) representative position to the MRC. The term for



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this role will be up to four years to allow for flexibility and will be determined at the start of their term.

- The MRC tabled Wooden Boat Festival on September 8-10, making 442 direct contacts, signing up 34 individuals to be notified of MRC meetings and volunteer opportunities, and collecting 19 completed community input surveys.
- The MRC is organizing a rain garden installation on September 21 at the Swan School in Port Townsend with 11 community volunteers signed up for morning and late afternoon shifts. This will be the MRC's last installation as we shift to maintenance of what will be a network of 19 rain gardens.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- The MRC was involved in the American Shoreline Podcast. The episode was called [Could the Marine Resource Committee Model be America's Coastal Solution?](#)
- The MRC was featured in the Whidbey News Times. [The link to the article is here.](#)

San Juan – Christina Koons

- MRC members are preparing for the Fall Great Island Cleanup happening on September 30.
- All summer projects are wrapping up and data is currently being summarized for Q4 reporting.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The Snohomish MRC has two upcoming grant projects: a 5-year strategic plan and conducting education and outreach on marine vegetation.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- Fidalgo Bay Day was a wide success. There was an opening tribute to Tokitae by Samish elder Rosie Cayou, as well as beach seining, tables from many organizations, and a touch tank. The event was zero waste.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- The MRC retreat has been scheduled for October 21 from 9 AM – 1 PM at the Squalicum Boathouse. The retreat will be facilitated by Hilary Wilkinson.
- The MRC's kelp surveys have ended for the season.
- Representative Rick Larsen came to visit Clayton Beach.

Round Table:

Lucas shared his appreciation for the tribal acknowledgement discussion.

Everyone thanked Commissioner Bacon for attending the meeting and sharing remarks.

Public Comment:

No public comment.



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December 8, 2023 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Alan Clark (Clallam - Vice Chair), Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Tom Cowan, Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Ginny Broadhurst, Nan McKay, Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Christina Koons (San Juan), Julia Parrish, Ahren Stroming (Puget Sound Partnership alternate)
Commission Staff: Caitlyn Blair, Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Dana Oster, Jessica Owens, Leah Robison, Allie Simpson, Jeff Whitty

Others in Attendance: Teal Waterstrat (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Tyler Porter (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Chris Kelley, Jerry Masters, Sarah Fisken (Jefferson Alternate), Don Hunger, Brad Bebout (Jefferson MRC), Ken Collins (Island MRC),

Absent: Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Cecilia Gobin (Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission)

Welcome and Introductions: Tim opened the meeting with introductions and the tribal acknowledgement.

Lucas shared some words about departing Commissioners and Marine Resources Committee members Bob Cecile (Whatcom MRC), Tom Cowan (Governor’s Appointee), and Elsa Schwartz (Island MRC).

The Commission approved the September Commission meeting minutes by consensus.

Committee Reports:

Executive Committee: Alan shared that due to some delays the NW Straits Commission and MRCs will not spend the full amount of NOAA fiscal year 2022 funds within the original award period (Jan-Dec 2023), so a no-cost extension has been submitted. The Commission is working on steps toward Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and will contract a consultant to carry out the first phase if the no-cost extension is approved. Alan also shared that the NW Straits Initiative is looking at a joint process to move forward with identifying structural needs across the NW Straits Foundation, the NW Straits Commission, and Marine Resources Committees.

Lucas shared that a small group of NW Straits Foundation and NW Straits Commission members met to discuss structural needs for the NW Straits Initiative. They discussed developing a set of shared goals to inform outcomes for a joint process that relates to challenges and opportunities for Foundation, Commission, and MRCs. The idea is to develop working groups out of these challenges and opportunities that arise, which would then move toward a retreat later in the year.



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Science Advisory Committee: Julia shared that the Science Advisory Committee had great interactions with conference attendees and are identifying ways to be more involved with Marine Resources Committees in 2024. The Committee is adding two new members in 2024.

External Relations Committee: Nan reported that the Committee is waiting to set up a meeting with Senator Murray's staff. The Committee is coordinating a review to consider removing the language about funding from the draft reauthorization bill.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program Overview

Teal Waterstrat and Tyler Porter gave a presentation on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program.

Business Items:

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

Evans School Partnership: Dana shared that the Northwest Straits Commission's proposal to the UW Evans School Student Consulting Lab was selected by students for a capstone project. The proposal was created by Commission and Marine Resources Committee staff to create a Community Needs Assessment framework that all Marine Resources Committees can use. The needs assessment will build on work Island Marine Resources Committee developed to better understand community priorities related to marine resources to inform strategic planning and project prioritization. The first round of the project will be from January – May 2024.

NW Straits Initiative Conference Evaluation Results: Caitlyn shared a summary of the survey results from the NW Straits Initiative Conference held November 3-4, 2023, in Port Townsend at the NW Maritime Center. The summary included data from respondents about the topics, activities, and flow of the conference. The summary also included comments outlining the commonalities amongst respondents.

Kelp Plan Status Update and Policy Recommendations: Jeff shared that the Kelp Plan webpage has been updated. It includes the Kelp Plan status report summary and the five themes that the NW Straits Initiative is encouraging partners and members to focus on in relation to the Kelp Plan. The webpage is posted [here](#).

On the webpage, there is a summary of the pre-policy work that was done in collaboration with several agencies.



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2024-2025 MRC Grant Approval (NOAA-Funded awards)

Sasha shared the list of projects proposed by MRCs for 2024-2025 using fiscal year 2023 funding from NOAA. This award period is for three years starting January 1, 2024. The project proposals are for just the first two years. The Commission moved and approved by consensus the projects proposed by the MRCs.

Partner Updates:

Puget Sound Partnership: Ahren shared that the Puget Sound Partnership has filled their staff positions for their strategic funding team, and they are looking to fill a grant writer position as well. The Partnership also launched their [Recovery Acceleration Funding tool](#).

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don shared updates about grant writing and reporting at the federal and state level. In September, the stewardship fund was launched to assist Marine Resources Committees and the public with hands-on stewardship activities. The first project was the Bowman Bay Stewardship day, which was highly successful. The NW Straits Foundation will be hiring a Communications and Marketing staff member.

MRC Reports:

Clallam – Alan Clark

- Forage Fish sampling continued on three beaches.
- The Elwha Beach survey of users is randomly occurring.
- Clallam MRC participated at StreamFest, which was sponsored by Port Angeles Garden Club at Peninsula College on October 14.
- Clallam MRC hosted a beach cleanup with Clallam Conservation District for Orca Recovery Week.

Island– Elsa Schwartz

- The MRC hosted a Shoreline Homeowner Workshop. Over 40 homeowners attended.
- The MRC hosted a hike and restoration activities at Hoypus Point for Orca Recovery Week.
- Packets were delivered to realtors across the county with shoreline information.
- The MRC is presenting their white paper to County Commissioners in a few weeks.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC submitted comments on the County Shoreline Master Program draft to the Jefferson Board of County Commissioners and Planning Committee on October 4.



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- The MRC appointed five new members: Brad Bebout (District 1), Timothy Behrenfeld (District 1 Alternate), Emily Buckner (Marine Science), Christopher Kelley (Marine Science Alternate), and Tim Cross (District 3 Alternate).
- The MRC launched its ninth year of monitoring forage fish spawning at Fort Townsend, with the season's first survey on October 26 and the next survey is planned for November 22.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- The Fall Great Islands Cleanup was a major success – with the dedication of 164 volunteers, the MRC successfully collected a whopping 1,871 pounds of litter from 50 miles of our island's roads and beaches. Special thanks to all the volunteers and partners at Zero-Waste-Washington, Friends of the San Juans, Lautenbach recycling, and Alchemy Arts Center for assisting with the event.
- The MRC is excited to welcome Brian Goodremond to the committee. Brian is an eco-tourism operator running San Juan Outfitters whale watching boats and recreational kayaking. He brings a wealth of knowledge about the Salish Sea and experience on the water to the committee.
- 117 creosote pilings were removed from Jackson's beach on San Juan Island. MRC members helped to provide guidance, marine mammal observation during construction, and got the ball rolling on improving nearshore habitats by removing toxic creosote materials.
- The State of Marine Stewardship Area (MSA) draft is nearly complete and has been distributed to MRC members for their review before our annual retreat next month. The MSA assessment provides a look at the current status of biodiversity targets, the current threats and knowledge gaps, and offers recommendations to achieve healthy ecosystem balance within the Marine Stewardship Area.
- In mid-November, the El Capitan sunk in West Sound Marina off Orcas Island. The Derelict Vessel Team has been monitoring the ship and working with DNR, DOE, SJC Department of Emergency Services, the US Coast Guard, and IOSA to respond and assess the situation. Due to the relatively clean and stable scene, the vessel does not pose and emergent pollutant risk warranting immediate removal. The MRC is continuing to monitor and communicate any changes.
- The MRC had an annual retreat in early December to celebrate the accomplishments over the past year, review the MSA plan, and draft a 2024 workplan.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- The MRC hosted a Bowman Bay Planting Work Party on October 12 with the Northwest Straits Foundation. Around 15 volunteers helped spread mulch and compost, remove



Minutes

weeds, and planted native plants. A forage fish survey was completed as well to understand the integral connections in the health of our shorelines. This year's plantings were incredibly successful due to weekly watering.

- 60 Conway 8th graders participated in the Fall 2023 Kids on the Beach Program classroom curriculum and forage fish surveys at Fidalgo Bay on October 2nd-6th.
- The MRC partnered with the NW Straits Foundation to remove 91 derelict crab pots in the waters off of Samish Island in 2023. The Foundation also removed 216 derelict crab pots around the Anacortes and Padilla Bay area. Over 71% were commercial pots. 92% of the pots were returned, recycled, or reused.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- MRC Staff met with the Port of Everett and DNR staff to discuss the possibility of having a vessel turn-in event in 2024.
- The MRC has two upcoming grant projects: a five-year strategic plan and conducting education and outreach on marine vegetation. Both subcommittees for next year's grant projects are working on materials for the consultant hiring process.
- Interviews for new MRC members were conducted in late October. The applications selected will be recommended to the council for appointment in late 2023 with terms starting in 2024.
- Both the marine vegetation subcommittee and the strategic planning subcommittee are in the process of hiring a consultant for the 2024-2025 grant projects,
- Three MRC applications were offered and have accepted positions on the MRC. They will be recommended to the council for appointment in late 2023, with terms beginning in 2024.

Whatcom – From written report

- The MRC retreat, facilitated by Hilary Wilkinson with Triangle Associates, was on October 21. Ten MRC members attended. Due to limited time, Hilary attended the November MRC meeting to discuss MRC member recruitment strategies.
- On November 13, the MRC deployed two mussel cages at Birch Bay to support the WDFW Mussel Monitoring Program. Three volunteers and one MRC member led the effort.
- The December 7 MRC meeting included nominations for MRC Officer positions, a discussion with the NW Straits Foundation about grants that align with the planned MRC projects and creating a formal work plan for engaging with County Council. A facilitated discussion is planned for January or February.

Public Comment:

No public comment.