



# Minutes

March 29, 2024 10:00 AM-12:00 PM  
Virtual Zoom Meeting  
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

## Attendees

**Commission Members:** Ken Collins (Island), Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit), Ginny Broadhurst, Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission), Tom Cowan, Nan McKay, Sarah Fisker (Jefferson – Alternate), Christina Koons (San Juan), Julia Parrish, Laura Bradstreet

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

**Others in Attendance:** Austin Rose, Don Hunger, Diane Hennebert (Skagit)

**Absent:** Mike Mackay (Whatcom)

## Welcome and Introductions:

Tim opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

The February minutes were approved as written by consensus.

## Business Items

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

**2024 NW Straits Initiative Conference:** The NW Straits Initiative Conference will be held at the Delta Hotel in Everett, Snohomish County on November 15-16, 2024. Caitlyn shared that Dr. Elin Kelsey will be the keynote speaker.

**San Juan boater impact project approval:** Sasha summarized the boater impact project proposal from San Juan MRC. The project will allow the MRC to assess vessel presence, activity, and density in relation to sensitive marine habitats. The project was approved by consensus.

**NW Straits Initiative Retreat:** Lucas shared that ECO Resources Group will be facilitating the NW Straits Initiative retreat in 2024. Caitlyn is currently working on scheduling the dates for the retreat, which will likely be held in late summer or fall. At the retreat, the NW Straits Initiative will focus on internal relationships.

**Senator Murray Thank You:** Jessica is working on a “thank you” video for Senator Murray for Puget Sound Day on the Hill in May. Members of the meeting recorded a “thank you” message. Jessica will be in touch about the next steps for the video. If you have questions, please reach out to her ([owens@nwstraits.org](mailto:owens@nwstraits.org)).



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## Committee Reports

**Executive Committee:** The Committee held their monthly meeting on March 18, 2024. Alan shared that the Committee discussed the process for creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the NW Straits Initiative and the Department of Ecology, which will outline the intended relationship. The Executive Committee will review the draft MOU during the writing process. The Committee also discussed “decision packages,” which are state agency funding requests, and will continue this conversation at the next monthly Committee meeting. The Committee is interested in learning more about how the Commission could engage in decision packages and if that would be a good strategic step for the organization. The Committee discussed writing a policy on if the NWS Commission should accept mitigation funds. Ginny Broadhurst will be invited to the next Committee meeting to discuss this policy.

**Science Advisory Committee:** Julia shared that the Committee has been discussing creating short skills-based trainings for MRCs. This idea came from interactions with Committee members at the 2023 conference. Dana has been orienting the new Committee member, Dr. Anne Beaudreau. Anne is an associate professor for the School of Marine Affairs at the University of WA and specializes in community work surrounding issues in fisheries. Additionally, the Committee has become involved in the green crab ad hoc committee discussions.

**External Relations Committee:** Nan shared that Senator Murray included one million dollars in programmatic funds for the NW Straits Commission in the recent appropriations bill for fiscal year 2024. The funding will be provided through NOAA Fisheries. This is the first time the NW Straits Commission will receive programmatic funding. Lucas and Nan met with Senator Murray’s staff to discuss the funding. Lucas will follow up with NOAA to identify next steps.

**Green Crab Ad Hoc Committee:** The goal of the ad hoc committee is to provide recommendations for how the Commission should engage in green crab work in the future. Several MRC members and NW Straits Commission staff were involved in the first meeting in March 2024. The next steps include talking with the Science Advisory Committee about invasive species removal. Staff are also creating an informational document for the Committee to share how other organizations are addressing green crab removal and how staff feel the Commission should engage on this issue longer term.

## MRC Reports

### Clallam – Alan Clark

- A special joint meeting was held with Jefferson MRC, including a presentation on tribal treaty rights by Cecilia Gobin.
- 74 tons of clean Pacific oyster shell spread by barge with Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe for Olympia oyster restoration in Sequim Bay.



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- Clallam MRC advisory subcommittee has drafted an advisory process protocol with Lucas Hart's assistance. The draft is now in review by all MRC members.

## **Island** – Ken Collins

- The MRC hosted a Forage Fish Class with the Alternative Learning Experience program.
- The MRC Comprehensive Plan committee has been tracking the County's development of a new Comprehensive Plan.
- The MRC hosted a retreat at the Cornet Bay Retreat Center.

## **Jefferson** – Sarah Fiskén

- Jefferson and Clallam MRCs hosted a joint meeting on March 6 at Red Cedar Hall in Jamestown. Cecilia Gobin gave a great presentation on tribal treaty rights.
- The MRC hiring subcommittee will begin the hiring process for Monica's replacement in April.
- ROV Project: Due to reduced staff support, the MRC won't be retrieving derelict crab pots this year in Port Townsend Bay. They will be performing sonar scans to get a better idea of how many pots are still in the water.

## **San Juan** – Christina Koons

- Applications have been coming in for the Free Vessel Turn-In event in April. The goal is to take care of as many derelict vessels as possible in a safe and responsible way. MRC members have helped with outreach and planning as they look forward to a successful event clearing vessels from waterways and marinas.
- The Spring Great Islands Cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup>. They are following this year's theme for Earth Day "Plastics vs. Planet." Activities have been planned on Orcas, Lopez, Shaw, and San Juan Island.

## **Skagit** – Diane Hennebert

- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Olympia oyster restoration work in Fidalgo Bay has been in the news recently and has sparked some interest from the public about getting involved and volunteering. Paul Dinnel was invited to give a presentation on oyster restoration to the Kiwanis Club of Anacortes on March 21 and the Salish Sea Stewards class on March 19.
- New NWSC Representative: Diane Hennebert has accepted a new position and will be resigning from the MRC at the end of March and will no longer be the NWSC representative. Lynne Wenberg-Davidson has been appointed as the new NWSC representative for Skagit MRC.



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## **Snohomish** – Tim Ellis

- A beach cleanup in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers is scheduled for March 28 at Howarth Park.
- The MRC is currently hiring for the Marine Ecology Intern position. The selected intern is expected to start in June 2024.

## **Whatcom** – Austin Rose

- The MRC recently lost an MRC member because she no longer lives in Whatcom County.
- The MRC has just reviewed the county's comprehensive plan update, and the MRC gathered six pages of comments and recommendations for the county.
- Beach seining with kids will kick off in April. Four schools and 190 students will be participating in the program.
- The MRC recently completed the social marketing design for protecting eelgrass in Wildcat Cove.

## **Partner Updates**

**NW Straits Foundation:** Don shared that the NW Straits Foundation has received funding for the Clayton Beach Restoration project. They also received funding for two paid interns, who will be working at Larrabee State Park to educate boaters and kayakers about eelgrass. They will also be assisting with rain gardens in Skagit for the MRC.

**NW Indian Fisheries Commission:** Cecilia Gobin shared that the NW Indian Fisheries Commission is working with the Army Corps of Engineers to amend the regional conditions of shoreline armor permitting. They will likely share a special public notice in the coming weeks about the comment period, which will be open for thirty days. Stay tuned for the notice.

**Puget Sound Partnership:** Laura shared that Puget Sound Day on the Hill is from May 13-17. Events will be planned for May 14-17. They will be highlighting reauthorization of the NW Straits Initiative as one of the Day on the Hill priorities.

## **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.