



# Minutes

May 31, 2024 10:00 AM-3:00 PM

In-Person Meeting, Camano Library, Island County  
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

## **Attendees**

**Commission Members:** Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Mike MacKay (Whatcom), Ken Collins (Island), Ginny Broadhurst, Christina Koons (San Juan), Laura Bradstreet (Puget Sound Partnership), Nan McKay, Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Tom Cowan

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

**Others in Attendance:** Elsa Schwartz, Barbara Bennett, Jill Lipoti, Jay Krienitz, Scott Chase, Don Hunger, Austin Rose, Katie Kowal, Kelly Zupich, Sarah Fisker

**Absent:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit)

## **Welcome and Introductions:**

Tim Ellis welcomed the group with introductions and the tribal acknowledgement.

The April NW Straits Commission minutes were approved as written by consensus.

## **NW Straits Elections:**

Tim Ellis was nominated and elected as chair, and Alan Clark was nominated and elected as vice chair.

## **Department of Ecology's new Coastal Resilience Initiative, what's new and what's coming**

Jay Krienitz presented on the Department of Ecology's new Coastal Resilience Initiative. The Coast and Ocean Management Unit developed a Coastal Resiliency program and a [Coastal Hazards Organizational Resilience Team \(COHORT\)](#) in response to coastal communities' requests for the state to help address the growing severity of natural hazards, which include flooding, erosion, sea level rise, landslides, and a Cascadia earthquake and tsunami event. If you are interested in viewing this presentation, please contact Caitlyn ([blair@nwstraits.org](mailto:blair@nwstraits.org)).

## **Island MRC Presentation: "Building a Sense of Place"**

Jill Lipoti presented on the ways Island MRC builds a sense of place with their volunteers. Building and creating a sense of place includes fostering relationships with people and the ecosystem that deepen our learning and awareness of the environment around us and where we



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live. If you are interested in viewing this presentation, please contact Caitlyn ([blair@nwstraits.org](mailto:blair@nwstraits.org)).

## **Retreat Update from ECO Resource Group**

Facilitators from ECO Resource Group, a consultant team contracted by the Commission to support preparation for a 2024 NW Straits Initiative retreat, shared an update on the planning process for the retreat agenda. They are completing individual interviews with folks from the NWS Initiative and have received over 60 responses to a separate survey. The interviews and survey are being used to collect insight on what is going well in the Initiative and opportunities for improvement. Information collected will be used to inform a leadership retreat that will be held in late summer/early fall.

## **Business Items**

**Puget Sound Day on the Hill:** The Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and Puget Sound Partnership led another successful Puget Sound Day on the Hill in May. Among the priorities at this year's Day on the Hill was reauthorization of the Northwest Straits Initiative. Meetings were held with the Washington State delegation to share the work of Marine Resources Committees and our many regional partnerships. Learn more about the future of the Initiative, resources, and links on our [Looking ahead](#) webpage.

## **Project Updates**

**Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI):** Athena Group is hosting focus groups for members of the NW Straits Initiative to share their thoughts and ideas about DEI and learn about the progress of this phase of the project, which is an internal assessment of the current state of DEI sentiments within the Northwest Straits Initiative. Virtual focus groups will be held on June 10 and June 13 for MRC volunteers, NW Straits Commissioners, NW Straits Foundation Board members, and MRC, NW Straits Commission, and NW Straits Foundation staff.

**Kelp Social Media Campaign:** Jeff and Jessica have been working on a social media campaign for the Kelp Plan. The goal is to reach out to invested people and get them involved in kelp restoration and education. There will be 17 posts on various social media from now to December. The posts will highlight the importance and status of kelp, sharing the kelp plan, highlighting project examples, and sharing helpful solutions for involvement in kelp restoration and projects.

**Derelict Vessel Update:** Skagit MRC, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Skagit County, Port of Skagit, La Conner Maritime Services, NW Straits Commission, WA Department of Ecology, and



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WA Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) are hosting a free vessel turn-in event at the end of July at the La Conner Marina. Apply or learn more in the [Vessel Turn-In Flyer](#).

## Committee Updates

**Science Advisory Committee:** Julia shared that the social science subcommittee is putting together a 101 workshop. The Committee is also in the process of reviewing MRC reports.

**Executive Committee:** The Committee is working on scheduling a joint Executive Committee meeting with the NWS Foundation. The Committee also discussed providing comments on the Army Corps of Engineers Regional General Conditions. Cecilia Gobin provided a draft letter. The Committee was supportive of the comments but wanted to seek NWS Commission input before moving forward with submitting the comments. The deadline for comment submission did not allow for the Committee to get Commission input before the due date.

The NW Straits Commission approved submission of the letter. They also suggested a change to the NWS Commission Rules of Procedure to allow the Executive Committee to submit comment letters without full Commission approval when the comments are on non-controversial matters.

**External Relations:** Nan shared that the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and Puget Sound Partnership led another successful Puget Sound Day on the Hill in May. Among the priorities at this year's Day on the Hill was reauthorization of the Northwest Straits Initiative.

**Green Crab Ad-Hoc Committee:** Lucas reminded the Commission that this committee was formed to make a decision on how the Commission would engage in the European green crab issue in the next biennium and beyond. Lucas informed the Commission that the Committee reached consensus that the Commission will continue its current level of work in the next biennium assuming funding is secured. The Commission will also work with partners such as WDFW in the next biennium to provide insight on transition needs for long term green crab management and what the NWS Commission's role will be. The Committee discussed one option for the Commission could be to take a more localized approach to engage MRCs. Though, more field support will be needed from other partners as the Commission would likely step away from ongoing field trapping. More discussions internally and with partners are needed to identify the Commission's long term role.

## **MRC Reports**

**Clallam** – Alan Clark



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- The MRC and Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe conducted a population survey of Olympia Oysters in the Sequim Bay restoration area over 2 days and collected broodstock for spawning.
- LaTrisha Suggs (representing the City of Port Angeles) is the new Chair of Clallam MRC, as Tim Cochnauer (representing the Community At-Large) ended his term as Chair. The vice chair is still Ann Soule.

## Island – Ken Collins

- Cornet Bay: The MRC, NWS Foundation, and volunteers came together at Cornet Bay to work on some weeding. The MRC removed 100 pounds of weeds including some that are categorized as noxious.
- Alternative Learning Experience Program Low Tide Walk: The MRC joined South Whidbey School District ALE Class to go on a low tide walk at Possession Point State Park.
- Penn Cove Water Festival: The MRC participated in the Penn Cove Water Festival by hosting an educational booth for families. The key focus was forage fish and their importance.

## Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC hired a new Coordinator, Katie Kowal, who started on the MRC on May 15, 2024.
- The Digging for Dinner event was on April 27, 2024. There were about 45 people in attendance.
- The MRC began a new project, which is monitoring kelp beds utilizing satellite imagery.

## San Juan – Christina Koons

- The MRC was represented at Friday Harbor Labs Open House on May 18. MRC members were able to share about the projects they are working on, answer questions, and discuss what actions are being taken.
- Vessel presence monitoring in eelgrass protection zones began in late May as the busy boating season kicks off. Members will be performing surveys around the county to add to collective data about recreational boats anchoring in sensitive eelgrass zones.
- MRC members, acting as the Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) for salmon recovery, visited six potential project sites on May 1-2. Projects ranged from acquisition to restoration to community conversations and covered locations on San Juan, Lopez, and Orcas Island.
- Jeff Dyer is retiring from his position on the MRC. The MRC is looking to fill the position.

## Skagit – From Report

- Kids on the Beach - May 22: Allen Elementary (Mount Vernon) – 40 fifth grade students participated in the mudflat safari at Bay View state park with the help of volunteers. The teachers were impressed by how engaged their students were! For many students it was their first time on a beach! See the article in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#).



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- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Paul Dinnel collected native oyster recruitment bags this month. Counted 450 juvenile oysters per 100 shells which is the highest settlement we've seen in Fidalgo Bay in the last 20 years.

## **Snohomish – Tim Ellis**

- The MRC intern will begin in early June and will support MRC projects and focus on creating a shoreline monitoring framework for the MRC.
- The Crabber Outreach subcommittee is preparing for crabber opening weekends.

## **Whatcom – Mike MacKay**

- The MRC made a recommendation to the Whatcom County Executive to appoint an applicant to the Citizen-at-large vacancy. This is an agenda item for the June 4 Council session.
- The MRC discussed the idea of piloting a virtual Voluntary No-Anchor Zone in Drayton Harbor which would be in partnership with the Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection District (DHSPD) – whose concerns go beyond eelgrass and include water quality and impacts to commercial shell fishing. The MRC tabled further discussion and decision making until the June MRC meeting.
- MRC staff provided WA State Parks staff with the social marketing materials developed by Shew Designs. Posters will be displayed at the Wildcat Cove boat launch and rack cards will be distributed to park guests at informational kiosks. The NW Straits Foundation has also hired two interns to engage with boaters at the launch to discuss best practices to preserve eelgrass, such as launching at a higher tide. The interns will start in early June.

**Public Comment:** No public comment.

## **Puget Sound Partnership**

Laura Bradstreet gave an update on Puget Sound Day on the Hill. There were over 60 people, and over 40 meetings were held. Northwest Straits Initiative Reauthorization was a major priority. She also shared that there will be a Puget Sound Partnership meeting at Oak Harbor Library on June 5<sup>th</sup> and June 6<sup>th</sup>.