



# Minutes

July 26, 2024, 10:00 AM-3:00 PM  
In-Person Meeting, Port Townsend Yacht Club, Port Townsend  
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, Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit), Jamie Stephens, Nan McKay

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

**Others in Attendance:** Austin Rose, Frances Robertson, Joenne McGerr, Liz Tobin, Brad Bebout, Christopher Kelley, Cheryl Lowe

**Absent:** Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission)

## Welcome and Introductions:

Alan Clark, standing in for Chair Tim Ellis who was attending virtually, welcomed the group with introductions and the tribal acknowledgement.

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

## Remarks from Joenne McGerr, Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program Manager:

Joenne McGerr, Shorelands and Environmental Assistance (SEA) Program Manager, shared about the several programs that she manages within the Department of Ecology, including shoreline and coastal planning, wetlands, the Washington Conservation Corps, Applied Coastal Research and Engineering, among many others. The Northwest Straits Commission is one of the programs that is administered within the SEA section of Ecology.

## Beyond Kayaks: Expanding Techniques for Monitoring Floating Kelp in Jefferson County:

**Christopher Kelley and Jeff Taylor, Jefferson MRC:** Jefferson County MRC Member Christopher Kelley gave a presentation about expanding techniques for monitoring floating kelp in Jefferson County. The presentation highlighted a variety of aerial imagery and pixels that can assist with tracking trends and changes in kelp beds of specific sites around Jefferson County. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the presentation, please reach out to Caitlyn Blair ([blair@nwstraits.org](mailto:blair@nwstraits.org)).



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## **Speed Date with a Scientist: Data-Driven Decision Making for a Sustainable Fishing Future, Liz Tobin:**

Liz Tobin, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe's Shellfish Program Manager was this month's [speed date with a scientist](#). Her presentation highlighted how the Tribe relies on data and collaboration to inform sustainable shellfisheries co-management. Liz featured research on Dungeness crab larval monitoring and population genetics coordinated by the Pacific Northwest Crab Research Group.

## **Business Items**

Commission staff provided updates on the following business items:

**NW Straits Commission 2025 Meeting Schedule:** Caitlyn shared the meeting schedule for 2025. The schedule was approved by consensus.

**NW Straits Initiative Conference:** Caitlyn reminded attendees about the dates and logistics for the NW Straits Initiative Conference on November 15-16 at the Delta Hotel in Everett. If you are planning to stay at the hotel and need accommodations, please see the [2024 Conference webpage](#).

## **Retreat Planning Exercise**

During the July Executive Committee meeting, the Committee discussed using a self-facilitated "carousel" strategy to collect feedback from Commissioners and attendees on the following questions posed by the Retreat Planning Committee:

- What is the role of the NW Straits Commission, NW Straits Foundation, MRCs, and Science Advisory Committee?
- What should the role of each of these entities be?

Meeting attendees participated in the activity and Lucas collected the responses for collation and reporting back to the Retreat Planning Committee at their next meeting.

## **Committee Updates**

**Science Advisory Committee:** The Science Advisory Committee is planning a session for the annual conference where attendees will get to meet and interact with the Committee. The Science Advisory Committee also shared their [Articles of Association](#) outlining the roles of the Committee. The roles focus on assisting Commission staff in an advisory role for MRC and regional projects, assisting with annual conference planning, the speed date with a scientist



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presentation series and additional emerging issues or tasks. Learn more about the SAC and members here: [Science Advisory Committee \(nwstraits.org\)](http://nwstraits.org).

**Executive Committee:** The Executive Committee met on July 15. The Committee discussed the retreat planning exercise as well as strategies for handling difficult and uncomfortable conversations during NW Straits Commission meetings. Several options were considered, such as: trainings through the Department of Ecology or outside organizations and readings from recommended books. The Committee recommended that establishing norms for meetings would be a valuable first step. The Executive Committee will discuss norms in upcoming Committee meetings and bring them to the Commission for further discussion at a later date.

**External Relations:** Nan shared that Senator Maria Cantwell has co-sponsored the NW Straits Initiative reauthorization bill. She also mentioned that Senator Murray came to Padilla Bay NERR on July 16 and MRC representatives were able to share their successful projects made possible with funding secured through Senator Murray's continued support of the NW Straits Initiative.

## MRC Reports

### **Clallam** – Alan Clark

- Olympia oyster broodstock had clean health assessment and are being spawned at the lab and will be returned to the MRC as spat on clean shell in bags.
- A subcommittee was called to action by the MRC Chair to define roles and responsibilities for MRC members.
- New educational posters and coasters are being designed with a graphic designer.

### **Island** – Ken Collins

- The MRC's most recent stewardship event took place at Cornet Bay. The work was focused on grass removal and cutting back thistle that was in bloom. 120 pounds of weeds were removed.
- The MRC is currently planning for the Shoreline Workshop they are hosting on October 5<sup>th</sup>. The Shoreline Armoring Report and Permit Analysis is complete. We will be working on getting the report out to as many groups as possible.

### **Jefferson** – Jeff Taylor

- Kelp kayak monitoring began on July 18<sup>th</sup>.
- The MRC has begun planning for the Wooden Boat Festival. This event will include tabling, in addition to a new Marine Science and Stewardship speaker stage, featuring 3 days of presentations and hands-on activities. The speaker stage is a partnership between the Jefferson MRC, Port Townsend Marine Science Center, and WA Sea Grant.



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## San Juan – Christina Koons

- Two new members have been recommended to join the SJC MRC – Olivia Graham and Mike Ramsey have moved forward in the committee process.
- The MRC is excited to welcome Roan Ontjes-DeGroot as our summer intern. Roan is attending Western Washington University studying Environmental Science. They will be assisting with vessel surveys, public outreach for Be Whale Wise education, and helping with derelict vessel patrols.
- Aerial surveys, shore-based vessel counts, and summertime outreach are well underway. Benthic habitat mapping is set to begin any day now.

## Skagit – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

- **Bowman Bay Discovery Day- Celebrating Habitat Restoration- June 28:** We kicked off the event with an overview of the history and ongoing habitat restoration of Bowman Bay presented by Lisa Kaufman. Outreach booths were hosted by the Skagit MRC, NWSF, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, The Salish Sea School, and the Salal Chapter of the Washington National Plant Society. Activities included spreading two yards of mulch within the restoration site, beach seining demonstrations, forage fish sampling demonstrations, forage fish eggs under microscopes, build a beach activity, and native plant ID. 14 first - third graders and 20 fifth – sixth graders from The Salish Sea School participated.
- **Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment:** We received the first two deliverables from Confluence including the initial new geodatabase structure with snapshots of the current parcel and drift cell datasets and the literature review spreadsheet of 168 possible source publications and dataset descriptions.
- The MRC is surveying a new kelp bed at Lone Tree in Skagit Bay at Swinomish.

## Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- Volunteers spoke with 185 people about how to not lose their crab pots during Snohomish County MRCs crabber outreach at the Port of Everett 10th street boat launch on July 6 and 7.
- Staff are working with a student in the UW Bothell Digital Scholars program to revamp and convert the MRC annual report in Canva to make future editing easier and potentially accessible to members. First drafts of the student's work were reviewed in July. A final is expected mid-August

## Whatcom – Mike MacKay

- MRC members Jim Boyle, Glen Alexander and Councilwoman Galloway met with Representative Rick Larsen on July 5 and highlighted Whatcom MRC projects including: the beach seine with kids program, eelgrass protection, European green crab project, bull kelp monitoring, harmful algal bloom monitoring, and derelict vessels.



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- The HABs team has been sampling for phytoplankton and mussels weekly at Semiahmoo Marina and Birch Bay Marina. Over the past month, there has been an observed increase in harmful algal species including Alexandrium (produces toxins associated with paralytic shellfish poisoning) and Dinophysis (produces toxins associated with diarrhetic shellfish poisoning). Beaches throughout Whatcom County have been closed for recreational harvest of shellfish since late May.

**Public Comment:** No public comment.

## **Partner Updates**

**Puget Sound Partnership:** Laura Bradstreet reported on the Puget Sound Partnership updates, which included the NW Straits Initiative reauthorization bill. Laura also shared that the Puget Sound Partnership will be having their September 11-12 Leadership Council meeting in Whatcom County at the Hotel Leo in Bellingham. For more information about the Puget Sound Partnership's meetings, visit their [website](#).

**NW Straits Foundation:** The NW Straits Foundation has begun recruiting for new NW Straits Foundation Board positions, with priority on representatives from Clallam, Island and Skagit counties.