



Minutes

January 26, 2024 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), Sarah Fiskén (Jefferson – Alternate), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Mike MacKay (Whatcom), Ken Collins (Island), Ginny Broadhurst, Karin Roemers-Klevin (San Juan), Ahren Stroming (Puget Sound Partnership – Alternate), Cecilia Gobin

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

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation)

Absent: Julia Parrish, Laura Blackmore

Welcome and Introductions:

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

The December NW Straits Commission minutes were approved by consensus.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Alan shared that the Committee recommended moving MRC Report sharing at NW Straits Commission meetings to earlier in the meeting, so MRC's have more opportunity to share updates with attendees. The Executive Committee recommended holding a virtual NW Straits Commission meeting in March due to the retreat that will be scheduled for later in 2024. The NW Straits Commission approved holding a meeting on March 29 by consensus.

Science Advisory Committee: The Committee sent invitations to add new members. Dr. Kathryn Sobocinski has been trained and onboarded. The Committee has their first meeting of 2024 next week, where they will choose the Committee representative for the NW Straits Initiative conference planning committee.

External Relations Committee: Lucas shared that the Committee is working on federal reauthorization and is currently awaiting updates on the federal reauthorization bill.

Business Items

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

NW Straits Initiative Conference Planning Committee: Caitlyn is looking to establish the 2024 planning committee for the NW Straits Initiative conference. If you are interested in being on the conference planning committee, please contact Caitlyn Blair (blair@nwstraits.org).



Minutes

Kelp Kayak Monitoring Update: Jeff hosted a virtual gathering to showcase the 2023 achievements for MRC volunteers and partner presenters, including the monitoring of 22 kelp beds by 54 participants covering 258 miles in the NW Straits region. Jeff also reviewed the data and monitored trends through the years. [Learn more about kelp kayak monitoring.](#)

Green Crab Update: The NW Straits Initiative is reviewing our long-term role in green crab trapping and monitoring. The funding for green crab monitoring from the Department of Fish and Wildlife will end in 2025. The NW Straits Commission recommends establishing an ad hoc committee for interested Commission members to discuss and decide on the Commission's role beyond that time. The NW Straits Commission approved the recommendation, by consensus, to establish an ad hoc committee. If you are a NW Straits Commission representative or alternate and are interested in being part of the ad hoc committee, please contact Lucas (hart@nwstraits.org).

2023 Impact Report update and timeline: Jessica Owens is working on the 2023 Impact Report. There will be a "soft launch" review session during February 12-16. If there are NW Straits Commission members that are interested in reviewing or giving final edits, please contact Jessica (owens@nwstraits.org).

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark

- Clallam County MRC continued forage fish sampling on three beaches.
- The MRC interviewed for a part time MRC Administrative Assistant.
- The MRC scheduled a joint meeting with Jefferson County MRC in March.
- The MRC established an advisory subcommittee to continue to work on language for Clallam MRC to advise the Board of County Commissioners.

Island – Ken Collins

- Island County MRC was able to present their white paper to County Commissioners, and it was well received. In their letter, they included information and concerns about shoreline armoring.

Jefferson – Sarah Fiskén

- The MRC voted on its 2024 Executive Committee at their December monthly meeting. The MRC is appointing Gordon King as Chair, Betsy Carlson as Vice Chair, Jeff Taylor as the NWSC representative, and Sarah Fiskén as the NWSC alternate.

San Juan – Karin Roemers -Kleven

- The local Sea Scout Troop was able to salvage emergency equipment and personal floatation devices from the Islander, an abandoned party barge the derelict vessel team



Minutes

has been working with to get removed from county waters. It currently is sitting on land in Anacortes and waiting to be demolished.

- The Plastic Free Salish Sea initiative has concluded a reporting contest for beach and road stewards. Heidi Laursen of Orcas Island recorded over 10 hours of removing microplastics and debris from local beaches and has won \$100 gift certificate to Friday Harbor House. We hope this will inspire more stewards to report their efforts and contribute to growing data of plastic pollution in the Salish Sea.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- **Olympia Oyster Restoration in Fidalgo Bay Report (Year 21):** The report was prepared by Paul Dinnel with results from the 2023 bay-wide native oyster population monitoring effort. The oyster population in Fidalgo Bay has increased from 3 million to over 5.5 million in just 5 years and has expanded their range beyond the original restoration areas. Recent article in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#).
- **Salish Sea Stewards Training:** There are 24 participants registered. Registration closes January 31st. Classes start Tuesday, February 6, 1-5pm at Padilla Bay. Training curriculum is close to being finalized and will be posted on the Skagit MRC website. Recent article in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#).
- **Kayak-Based Kelp Surveys:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit MRC member), and Jeff Whitty (NWSC) were recently interviewed by the Skagit Valley Herald for an article on kelp.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- In partnership with the WSU Beach Watchers, the Starlight Beach Walk is scheduled for the evening of February 6th from 7pm – 8:30pm at Olympic Beach.
- The strategic planning subcommittee held a kick-off meeting on January 9. The group is currently finalizing interview questions to be used in individual interviews with MRC members to coalesce ideas of where the MRC should be headed.
- The County Commission approved three new members be added to the MRC.

Whatcom – Mike MacKay

- The MRC has received approval from Lummi Natural Resources to conduct 3 days of sampling/seining with 4th grade students. To accommodate as many students as possible at the seine events, the MRC plans an activity at the park with half the students while the others are participating in the seine, then the groups swap. Volunteer help is needed.
- Whatcom County is commencing its 2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, and Planning and Development Services (PDS) staff are soliciting recommendations from the Marine Resources Committee on what amendments should be considered in the Marine Resources Lands section of Chapter 8, Resource Lands, and Chapter 10, Environment.



Minutes

Partner Updates

NW Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin shared that she is waiting for the final review of a letter to the Dept of Interior requesting her appointment to the NW Straits Commission as the tribal representative. Cecilia also shared that the NW Indian Fisheries Commission is working on nearshore habitat protections and is working with the Army Corps of Engineers to improve the process for approving shoreline armoring permits.

NW Straits Foundation: Don Hunger shared updates for the NW Straits Foundation. Doug McCutcheon has been appointed as a new board member. If MRC members are interested in participating as a board member on the NW Straits Foundation, please contact Don (don@nwstraitsfoundation.org). The NW Straits Foundation also recently hired a communications staff member, Kayla Mrozik.

Puget Sound Partnership: Ahren Stroming shared that the Puget Sound Partnership's strategic funding team is almost fully staffed. The Partnership has also launched their [Puget Sound Rapid Recovery Acceleration Funding Tool](#).

Ahren also shared that Puget Sound Day on the Hill is scheduled for May 13th through May 17th. NW Straits Commission members are invited to attend. Federal Reauthorization of the NW Straits Initiative is one of three key priorities for the Day on the Hill.

The Partnership also wanted to ensure that the Commission and MRCs are aware of their [Nearshore Conservation Credit Program](#). If MRCs have nearshore conservation projects in need of funding, they are encouraged to submit proposals.

Public Comment

No public comment.



Minutes

February 23, 2024 10:00 AM-2:30 PM
In-Person Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Mike MacKay (Whatcom), Ken Collins (Island), Ginny Broadhurst, Christina Koons (San Juan), Laura Bradstreet (Puget Sound Partnership), Nan McKay, Jeff Taylor (Jefferson)

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

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Kayla Mrozik (NW Straits Foundation), Jerry Masters (NW Straits Foundation), Austin Rose, Dana Flerchinger, Rick Beauregard, Kaylee Galloway (Whatcom County Council), Hayden Jenkins (Senator Murray's Staff)

Absent: Julia Parrish, Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission)

Welcome and Introductions:

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

The January NW Straits Commission minutes were approved by consensus.

Speed Date with a Scientist

Braeden Van Deynze, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife Resource Economist, presented on the emerging research and data of measuring the demand for freshwater recreation in the North Puget Sound region.

Business Items

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

U.S. v WA Boldt Decision event: Lucas gave a debrief on the U.S. v WA Boldt Decision event that six NW Straits Commission staff were able to attend. The event brought together several tribes and communities around the NW Straits and Puget Sound region. Tribal members, policy leaders and youth shared the history and present struggles and accomplishments of the Boldt Decision and upholding tribal treaty rights. NW Straits Commission staff are grateful to the NW Indian Fisheries Commission and the Muckleshoot Tribe for hosting this event and inviting us to attend.



Minutes

Green Crab Ad-Hoc Committee: Allie shared that the green crab ad hoc committee will be implemented. The Department of Fish and Wildlife is assessing ways to alter their approach to management of European Green crab to focus more on regional and local coordination. The ad hoc committee will guide the NW Straits Commission's role in European Green crab trapping in the future.

DEI Update: Allie shared that the NW Straits Commission has moved forward with a DEI consultant, Athena Group, to assess diversity, equity, and inclusion within the NW Straits Initiative. The NW Straits Commission reached out to MRC members for interest in attending meetings and providing support on documents. The first meeting to kick off this project is Friday, March 1. If you have questions about DEI at the NW Straits Initiative, please contact Allie Simpson (simpson@nwstraits.org).

Impact Report: The NW Straits Commission 2023 Impact Report will be available digitally as of February 27, 2024. To read the impact report, see our [website](#), or this [link](#). Thank you to everyone who contributed!

2024 NWSI Conference Update: Caitlyn shared that after a long and exhaustive process of research, she has secured the Delta Hotel in Everett, Snohomish County. The Conference will be held on November 15-16, 2024. If you have questions about the 2024 annual conference, please e-mail Caitlyn (blair@nwstraits.org).

Puget Sound Day on the Hill: Lucas shared that Puget Sound Day on the Hill will be May 13 – 17. The NW Straits Commission approved to add our signature to the letters of support by consensus.

Northwest Straits Commission Director Position Update: Lucas shared that the Northwest Straits Commission Director position's supervisor will be changing from the Padilla Bay Director to the Shorelands and Environmental Assistance (SEA) Program Manager. The change is necessary to accommodate the Northwest Straits Commission Director's position as an Exempt Management Services (EMS) employee, as opposed to a Washington Management Services Employee (WMS). The position has been EMS for a number of years. EMS positions in the SEA Program report to the Program Manager. The change in supervisory status will elevate the Commission Director in the Department of Ecology and allow them to work more directly on contracting, staffing, agency related funding and other decisions that directly affect Northwest Straits Commission business.



Minutes

Committee Updates

Science Advisory Committee: Dana shared that the committee had a meeting in January. At the meeting, the committee nominated Tom Mumford to be the Science Advisory Committee representative on the NW Straits Initiative 2024 conference planning committee. Dana shared that the committee is working to create educational trainings for MRCs, and the first training will involve applied social science.

Executive Committee: Alan shared that the committee recommends creating a second tribal seat on the Northwest Straits Commission. The seat would represent a coalition of tribes. Lucas and Cecilia Gobin would work together to seek nominations from the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. The NW Straits Commission motioned to approve this by consensus.

The Committee requested that Todd Hass be approved to serve on the Green Crab Ad-Hoc Committee. Todd was nominated by Laura Bradstreet to serve as her delegate on the Ad-Hoc Committee. The NW Straits Commission approved this nomination by consensus.

The committee discussed conservation credits and mitigation funds, which are intended to offset the impacts of development that have negative consequences to the environment. The NW Straits Commission has no policy on use of these funds. The committee brought this topic to the NW Straits Commission to discuss if a policy is needed. Laura recommended that Ahren Stroming present about this topic at a NW Straits Commission meeting. The committee will continue discussing this topic in future meetings.

External Relations: Nan shared that there is excitement and momentum for Puget Sound Day on the Hill from May 13 – 17. There were no further updates at this time.

Remarks from Whatcom County Commissioner Kaylee Galloway, District 1: Kaylee Galloway shared some remarks with the group. In her position, she specifically addresses climate change at a local level. Whatcom County approved a climate action plan in November 2021, and worked with 19 advisory groups on this plan, including Whatcom MRC.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Harmful Algal Bloom Project by Rick Beauregard (Whatcom MRC): Rick Beauregard gave a presentation on the Drayton Harbor Harmful Algal Bloom project. In 2023, they surveyed phytoplankton and harmful algal bloom species (HABS) to determine biotoxin presence in Drayton Harbor, and how these biotoxins contributed to paralytic shellfish toxins. Volunteers spent over



Minutes

2,000 hours collecting data and analyzed over 620 phytoplankton samples. For more information, see the presentation slides [here](#).

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark

- The MRC continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Elwha Beach surveys of users are randomly occurring monthly.
- The joint Jefferson/Clallam MRC meeting is on March 6th in Sequim.
- The MRC's advisory Sub-Committee is continuing to work on language for Clallam MRC to advise BOCC.
- Ediz Hook planting will occur on March 26th & 28th.
- HAZWOPER/Oiled bird training took place February 13 & 14 at the Jamestown Tribal Center.
- The MRC's new Administrative Assistant is starting February 20th!

Island – Ken Collins

- The MRC presented at the ALE Program Science Panel.
- The Jan Holmes Coastal Volunteer Award was awarded to Scott Chase.
- The MRC has launched its Comprehensive Planning process effective January 2024. This work will frame a vision and code elements for the County through 2045. The Island County Marine Resources Committee has formed a sub-committee to address opportunities related to marine resources.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- MRC staff for Clallam and Jefferson, along with Robert Knapp, Clallam MRC Tribal Representative, are working on organizing a joint Clallam-Jefferson MRC meeting set for March 6 to include a guest speaker, Cecilia Gobin, presenting on Tribal Treaty Rights as well as time to network across MRCs.
- The MRC connected Port of Port Townsend staff, NW Straits Foundation Shore Friendly staff, and fourteen members of the public for a site visit at Quilcene Herb Beck Marina on January 20. The site visit provided an opportunity to discuss the feasibility of restoring the natural shoreline as a component of the Port's dredging activities at the marina, using dredge spoils for beach nourishment and other options for enhancing the site for wildlife and public enjoyment.
- The MRC Coordinator will be stepping down from her position as of February 23, and Jefferson County has begun the process of finding her replacement.
- The storm surge projects are now on Sound IQ.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- Outreach efforts are well underway for the Free Vessel Turn-In Event in April. Fliers have been posted, press releases printed in local papers, a flurry of social media posts and



Minutes

shares have reached the interwebs blasting the message out even farther. Eligible vessel owners will need to apply to the program turn through DNR to participate in the turn-in event.

- The MRC represented Plastic Free Salish Sea at the recent 25th Storming the Sound Conference for marine educators at the end of January. It was a great way to spread the message about reducing plastic pollution and finding positive ways to prevent and remove litter from our local waterways.
- The County has been working on updating their marine stewardship plan. The recent draft was sent out for peer review.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- **Bowman Bay Seining:** We are conducting bi-monthly beach seining surveys with the NW Straits Foundation to document fish use as part of the comprehensive study on the Bowman Bay Restoration Project. The first seining event took place January 26th with 7 volunteers.
- **Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment:** Posted the Request for Quotes and Qualifications for the Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment project. Deadline for responses is February 29th.
- **Culturally Responsive Elementary Science Teaching (CREST):** CREST is a 3-year research project to study the effect of teachers utilizing the 'Explore the Salish Sea' curriculum which takes elementary school kids (primarily 5th grade) out to the beach and incorporates science and indigenous knowledge and practices into culturally responsive instruction. Skagit MRC is one of several community-based organizations that signed up to participate. Pete Haase is Skagit MRC's representative. Teacher workshops will take place next year in Whatcom County with 30 5th graders.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The Starlight beach walk was held on February 6th and had a great turn out of over 160 people. Read the article [here](#).
- The MRC is beginning the strategic planning process, and each MRC member is currently being interviewed to capture their perspective. In March, the MRC will participate in an in-person workshop to further delve into the process.
- The MRC wrote a one pager on dredge spoils.

Whatcom – Mike MacKay

- Whatcom County is commencing its 2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, and Planning and Development Services (PDS) staff are soliciting recommendations from the Marine Resources Committee on what amendments should be considered in the Marine Resources Lands section of Chapter 8, Resource Lands, and Chapter 10, Environment. The MRC will approve their final list of recommendations during their March 7th meeting.



Minutes

- A few new members joined the MRC including Avery Maverick and Joe Hoats. The MRC also now has representation from Blaine City Council: Mayor Mary Lou Steward, and Bellingham City Council: Jace Cotton.
- The MRC has sent invitations to all schools in the county for the Kids on the Beach program. 17 schools have responded with interest.

Partner Updates

NW Straits Foundation: Sarah Fisker from Jefferson Marine Resources Committee and Doug McCutchen have joined the NW Straits Foundation Board. Phil Salditt, Foundation Board member, joined Snohomish MRC. Kayla Mrozik joined the NW Straits Foundation as the Marketing and Communications Coordinator in January.

Jerry Masters shared upcoming events with the group. On April 10 from 10 AM – 2:00 PM, there will be a spring planting party at Deception Pass State Park. On May 5, there will be a spring party at the Edmonds waterfront, more details will be available soon.

Puget Sound Partnership: Laura Bradstreet shared updates from the Puget Sound Partnership. Puget Sound Day on the Hill is May 13-17, 2024, in Washington D.C. Laura attended a meeting with Senator Maria Cantwell to discuss the “Whale Desk”, which is a pilot program that was signed into law in December 2022. The program is meant to bring together vessel operators, scientists, and the Coast Guard to reduce encounters that disturb whales. Laura also mentioned that the state [legislative tracking page](#) and [Recovery Acceleration Funding Tool](#) are now available.

The Puget Sound Partnership is also hiring positions such as an Ecosystem Recovery Coordinator and a Boards Program Coordinator. Visit their [website](#) for more information.



Minutes

February 23, 2024 10:00 AM-2:30 PM
In-Person Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Mike MacKay (Whatcom), Ken Collins (Island), Ginny Broadhurst, Christina Koons (San Juan), Laura Bradstreet (Puget Sound Partnership), Nan McKay, Jeff Taylor (Jefferson)

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

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Kayla Mrozik (NW Straits Foundation), Jerry Masters (NW Straits Foundation), Austin Rose, Dana Flerchinger, Rick Beauregard, Kaylee Galloway (Whatcom County Council), Hayden Jenkins (Senator Murray's Staff)

Absent: Julia Parrish, Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission)

Welcome and Introductions:

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

The January NW Straits Commission minutes were approved by consensus.

Speed Date with a Scientist

Braeden Van Deynze, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife Resource Economist, presented on the emerging research and data of measuring the demand for freshwater recreation in the North Puget Sound region.

Business Items

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

U.S. v WA Boldt Decision event: Lucas gave a debrief on the U.S. v WA Boldt Decision event that six NW Straits Commission staff were able to attend. The event brought together several tribes and communities around the NW Straits and Puget Sound region. Tribal members, policy leaders and youth shared the history and present struggles and accomplishments of the Boldt Decision and upholding tribal treaty rights. NW Straits Commission staff are grateful to the NW Indian Fisheries Commission and the Muckleshoot Tribe for hosting this event and inviting us to attend.



Minutes

Green Crab Ad-Hoc Committee: Allie shared that the green crab ad hoc committee will be implemented. The Department of Fish and Wildlife is assessing ways to alter their approach to management of European Green crab to focus more on regional and local coordination. The ad hoc committee will guide the NW Straits Commission's role in European Green crab trapping in the future.

DEI Update: Allie shared that the NW Straits Commission has moved forward with a DEI consultant, Athena Group, to assess diversity, equity, and inclusion within the NW Straits Initiative. The NW Straits Commission reached out to MRC members for interest in attending meetings and providing support on documents. The first meeting to kick off this project is Friday, March 1. If you have questions about DEI at the NW Straits Initiative, please contact Allie Simpson (simpson@nwstraits.org).

Impact Report: The NW Straits Commission 2023 Impact Report will be available digitally as of February 27, 2024. To read the impact report, see our [website](#), or this [link](#). Thank you to everyone who contributed!

2024 NWSI Conference Update: Caitlyn shared that after a long and exhaustive process of research, she has secured the Delta Hotel in Everett, Snohomish County. The Conference will be held on November 15-16, 2024. If you have questions about the 2024 annual conference, please e-mail Caitlyn (blair@nwstraits.org).

Puget Sound Day on the Hill: Lucas shared that Puget Sound Day on the Hill will be May 13 – 17. The NW Straits Commission approved to add our signature to the letters of support by consensus.

Northwest Straits Commission Director Position Update: Lucas shared that the Northwest Straits Commission Director position's supervisor will be changing from the Padilla Bay Director to the Shorelands and Environmental Assistance (SEA) Program Manager. The change is necessary to accommodate the Northwest Straits Commission Director's position as an Exempt Management Services (EMS) employee, as opposed to a Washington Management Services Employee (WMS). The position has been EMS for a number of years. EMS positions in the SEA Program report to the Program Manager. The change in supervisory status will elevate the Commission Director in the Department of Ecology and allow them to work more directly on contracting, staffing, agency related funding and other decisions that directly affect Northwest Straits Commission business.



Minutes

Committee Updates

Science Advisory Committee: Dana shared that the committee had a meeting in January. At the meeting, the committee nominated Tom Mumford to be the Science Advisory Committee representative on the NW Straits Initiative 2024 conference planning committee. Dana shared that the committee is working to create educational trainings for MRCs, and the first training will involve applied social science.

Executive Committee: Alan shared that the committee recommends creating a second tribal seat on the Northwest Straits Commission. The seat would represent a coalition of tribes. Lucas and Cecilia Gobin would work together to seek nominations from the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. The NW Straits Commission motioned to approve this by consensus.

The Committee requested that Todd Hass be approved to serve on the Green Crab Ad-Hoc Committee. Todd was nominated by Laura Bradstreet to serve as her delegate on the Ad-Hoc Committee. The NW Straits Commission approved this nomination by consensus.

The committee discussed conservation credits and mitigation funds, which are intended to offset the impacts of development that have negative consequences to the environment. The NW Straits Commission has no policy on use of these funds. The committee brought this topic to the NW Straits Commission to discuss if a policy is needed. Laura recommended that Ahren Stroming present about this topic at a NW Straits Commission meeting. The committee will continue discussing this topic in future meetings.

External Relations: Nan shared that there is excitement and momentum for Puget Sound Day on the Hill from May 13 – 17. There were no further updates at this time.

Remarks from Whatcom County Commissioner Kaylee Galloway, District 1: Kaylee Galloway shared some remarks with the group. In her position, she specifically addresses climate change at a local level. Whatcom County approved a climate action plan in November 2021, and worked with 19 advisory groups on this plan, including Whatcom MRC.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Harmful Algal Bloom Project by Rick Beauregard (Whatcom MRC): Rick Beauregard gave a presentation on the Drayton Harbor Harmful Algal Bloom project. In 2023, they surveyed phytoplankton and harmful algal bloom species (HABS) to determine biotoxin presence in Drayton Harbor, and how these biotoxins contributed to paralytic shellfish toxins. Volunteers spent over



Minutes

2,000 hours collecting data and analyzed over 620 phytoplankton samples. For more information, see the presentation slides [here](#).

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark

- The MRC continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Elwha Beach surveys of users are randomly occurring monthly.
- The joint Jefferson/Clallam MRC meeting is on March 6th in Sequim.
- The MRC's advisory Sub-Committee is continuing to work on language for Clallam MRC to advise BOCC.
- Ediz Hook planting will occur on March 26th & 28th.
- HAZWOPER/Oiled bird training took place February 13 & 14 at the Jamestown Tribal Center.
- The MRC's new Administrative Assistant is starting February 20th!

Island – Ken Collins

- The MRC presented at the ALE Program Science Panel.
- The Jan Holmes Coastal Volunteer Award was awarded to Scott Chase.
- The MRC has launched its Comprehensive Planning process effective January 2024. This work will frame a vision and code elements for the County through 2045. The Island County Marine Resources Committee has formed a sub-committee to address opportunities related to marine resources.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- MRC staff for Clallam and Jefferson, along with Robert Knapp, Clallam MRC Tribal Representative, are working on organizing a joint Clallam-Jefferson MRC meeting set for March 6 to include a guest speaker, Cecilia Gobin, presenting on Tribal Treaty Rights as well as time to network across MRCs.
- The MRC connected Port of Port Townsend staff, NW Straits Foundation Shore Friendly staff, and fourteen members of the public for a site visit at Quilcene Herb Beck Marina on January 20. The site visit provided an opportunity to discuss the feasibility of restoring the natural shoreline as a component of the Port's dredging activities at the marina, using dredge spoils for beach nourishment and other options for enhancing the site for wildlife and public enjoyment.
- The MRC Coordinator will be stepping down from her position as of February 23, and Jefferson County has begun the process of finding her replacement.
- The storm surge projects are now on Sound IQ.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- Outreach efforts are well underway for the Free Vessel Turn-In Event in April. Fliers have been posted, press releases printed in local papers, a flurry of social media posts and



Minutes

shares have reached the interwebs blasting the message out even farther. Eligible vessel owners will need to apply to the program turn through DNR to participate in the turn-in event.

- The MRC represented Plastic Free Salish Sea at the recent 25th Storming the Sound Conference for marine educators at the end of January. It was a great way to spread the message about reducing plastic pollution and finding positive ways to prevent and remove litter from our local waterways.
- The County has been working on updating their marine stewardship plan. The recent draft was sent out for peer review.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- **Bowman Bay Seining:** We are conducting bi-monthly beach seining surveys with the NW Straits Foundation to document fish use as part of the comprehensive study on the Bowman Bay Restoration Project. The first seining event took place January 26th with 7 volunteers.
- **Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment:** Posted the Request for Quotes and Qualifications for the Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment project. Deadline for responses is February 29th.
- **Culturally Responsive Elementary Science Teaching (CREST):** CREST is a 3-year research project to study the effect of teachers utilizing the 'Explore the Salish Sea' curriculum which takes elementary school kids (primarily 5th grade) out to the beach and incorporates science and indigenous knowledge and practices into culturally responsive instruction. Skagit MRC is one of several community-based organizations that signed up to participate. Pete Haase is Skagit MRC's representative. Teacher workshops will take place next year in Whatcom County with 30 5th graders.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The Starlight beach walk was held on February 6th and had a great turn out of over 160 people. Read the article [here](#).
- The MRC is beginning the strategic planning process, and each MRC member is currently being interviewed to capture their perspective. In March, the MRC will participate in an in-person workshop to further delve into the process.
- The MRC wrote a one pager on dredge spoils.

Whatcom – Mike MacKay

- Whatcom County is commencing its 2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, and Planning and Development Services (PDS) staff are soliciting recommendations from the Marine Resources Committee on what amendments should be considered in the Marine Resources Lands section of Chapter 8, Resource Lands, and Chapter 10, Environment. The MRC will approve their final list of recommendations during their March 7th meeting.



Minutes

- A few new members joined the MRC including Avery Maverick and Joe Hoats. The MRC also now has representation from Blaine City Council: Mayor Mary Lou Steward, and Bellingham City Council: Jace Cotton.
- The MRC has sent invitations to all schools in the county for the Kids on the Beach program. 17 schools have responded with interest.

Partner Updates

NW Straits Foundation: Sarah Fisker from Jefferson Marine Resources Committee and Doug McCutchen have joined the NW Straits Foundation Board. Phil Salditt, Foundation Board member, joined Snohomish MRC. Kayla Mrozik joined the NW Straits Foundation as the Marketing and Communications Coordinator in January.

Jerry Masters shared upcoming events with the group. On April 10 from 10 AM – 2:00 PM, there will be a spring planting party at Deception Pass State Park. On May 5, there will be a spring party at the Edmonds waterfront, more details will be available soon.

Puget Sound Partnership: Laura Bradstreet shared updates from the Puget Sound Partnership. Puget Sound Day on the Hill is May 13-17, 2024, in Washington D.C. Laura attended a meeting with Senator Maria Cantwell to discuss the “Whale Desk”, which is a pilot program that was signed into law in December 2022. The program is meant to bring together vessel operators, scientists, and the Coast Guard to reduce encounters that disturb whales. Laura also mentioned that the state [legislative tracking page](#) and [Recovery Acceleration Funding Tool](#) are now available.

The Puget Sound Partnership is also hiring positions such as an Ecosystem Recovery Coordinator and a Boards Program Coordinator. Visit their [website](#) for more information.



Minutes

April 26, 2024, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Mike MacKay (Whatcom), Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Christina Koons (San Juan), Ginny Broadhurst, Laura Bradstreet (Puget Sound Partnership), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Ken Collins (Island), Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit), Nan McKay, Julia Parrish, Cecilia Gobin
Commission Staff: Leah Skare, Caitlyn Blair, Sasha Horst, Lucas Hart, Allie Simpson, Jessica Owens, Jeff Whitty, Dana Oster
Others in Attendance: Craig Thomas, Thomas Koontz, Don Hunger

Welcome and Introductions:

Tim opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

The March minutes were approved as written by consensus.

Tim shared that the NW Straits Commission elections for Chair and Vice Chair will occur at the May meeting. Please e-mail Nan McKay (nan.mckay10@gmail.com) with your nominations.

Use of Science in Ecosystem Recovery Partnerships in the Puget Sound: Tom Koontz and Craig Thomas from the University of Washington presented about how collaborative partnerships use science in the Puget Sound basin. Their presentation is not available to distribute, but they noted that MRCs can contact them if they would like a presentation.

Business Items

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

2024 NW Straits Initiative Retreat: Lucas shared that ECO Resource Group will be assisting with our retreat planning. The retreat conversations will inform the concept of what the NW Straits Initiative is today and how it has evolved over the last 25 years. Lucas shared the proposed timeline, as well as the process for selecting questions for individual interviews. Questions will be formed by representatives of the NW Straits Initiative, ECO Resource Group will refine the



Minutes

questions, and representatives from the NWSI will help finalize the questions. Results from the interviews will be shared at a later date.

DEI Update: Allie shared an update about the NW Straits Initiative's progress with Athena Group on an internal DEI assessment of the Initiative. A survey will be sent out in May for all NW Straits Initiative members. Allie and Caitlyn will be reaching out to the DEI project team to review the survey questions. We will continue to inform the NW Straits Commission on our progress.

Project Updates

Community Needs Assessment: Dana recommended everyone attend the Snohomish MRC meeting on May 15, 2024, from 6:30 – 8:30 PM. The UW Evans School will be presenting their summary of the community needs assessment at the Snohomish MRC meeting.

Senator Murray "Thank You" Video: Jessica shared the draft of the "Thank You" video for Senator Murray, which thanks Senator Murray for helping secure funding for 2024 and for her ongoing support of the NW Straits Initiative.

Kayak Kelp Monitoring: Jeff shared that the 2024 kayak monitoring season is kicking off. Commission staff is coordinating a workgroup, inclusive of MRCs, NW Straits Commission staff, and NW Straits Foundation staff. The goal is to share key notes, provide input, and share their experiences. The annual kayak kickoff will be on May 1, 2024, at Padilla Bay. Jeff is working on providing a kayak safety course at Bowman Bay. Please contact Jeff (whitty@nwstraits.org) for more information.

San Juan Vessel Turn-In Event

Dana and Christina shared the successes of the San Juan County vessel turn-in event in Friday Harbor. Fourteen vessels were removed and deconstructed in partnership with the NW Straits Commission, Department of Natural Resources, and the Port of Friday Harbor.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Alan shared that the Committee discussed mitigation funds at the last meeting. Ahren Stroming will be attending a future meeting to share about the Puget Sound Partnership Conservation Credit Fund. The Committee also discussed the NW Straits Commission mission statement as it appears in the 1998 Murray Metcalf report. The Committee would like to review this mission statement to evaluate what, if anything, has changed since it was written.

External Relations Committee: Nan shared that several MRC members and Lucas will be attending Puget Sound Day on the Hill and they are starting to schedule meetings with



Minutes

representatives. The Committee is hoping to set up meetings with legislators from the NW Straits region.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia shared that at the recent Committee meeting, they discussed social science workshops for MRCs. They also discussed how this workshop could influence the Committee feature session at the 2024 NW Straits Initiative conference.

Green Crab Ad Hoc Committee: Lucas shared that April 29, 2024, is the next meeting. The Committee will have more updates at the May Commission meeting.

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark

- A planting event was held at Ediz Hook on March 26 and March 28, 2024, in partnership with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and Clallam Conservation District. 59 volunteers planted 3,000 plants and sowed 5 pounds of seed over two days.
- The MRC hosted Max Showalter and Cynthia Harbison during the April meeting to discuss the [kelp and eelgrass health plan](#) from DNR, and MRC members and staff provided feedback and relevant local connections.

Island – Ken Collins

- The MRC hosted a stewardship event at Cornet Bay and Hoypus point on April 10, 2024.
- MRC member Kirk Larsen and MRC staff Kelly Zupich joined the South Whidbey School District Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) class to conduct a mock forage fish survey at Keystone Farm.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC interviewed four candidates for the MRC Coordinator position.
- Eelgrass protection summer spar buoys were deployed on April 7, 2024.
- Two yards of cultch were spread in the south end of Discovery Bay on April 15, 2024, for Olympia oyster restoration.
- The Digging for Dinner event will be held on April 27, 2024, in Quilcene.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- The Free Vessel Turn-In Event was a smashing success – literally! Thanks to strong partnership with NWSC, DNR, and Port of Friday Harbor at least 14 vessels have been removed and deconstructed from county waters. Watching long-time, dilapidated boats make the transition from potential marine debris to safely surrenders and dismantled makes all the difference for local marine waters.
- The Spring Great Islands Clean Up happened on April 20, 2024, with activities on all four ferry serviced islands and independent cleanups were coordinated on several outer



Minutes

islands including Waldron, Yellow, Stuart, and Decatur. The remaining debris were picked up via boat and taken to the transfer station on April 22, 2024. MRC members diligently spread the word, including outreach to marinas and hanging fliers for boaters to participate as well.

Skagit – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

- **Kids on the Beach** – Concrete High School participated on April 10, 2024. Two classes of 10th grade Physical Science students and one class of 11th grade Environmental Science students participated in the Kids on the Beach program at Padilla Bay. Every student was involved in data collection including density and diversity of intertidal organisms at three locations along a transect line. They also collected weather, water temperature and substrate composition data.
- **Pinto Abalone Restoration** – The Puget Sound Restoration Fund partnered with the Seattle Aquarium and Samish Tribe to help with surveys and out planting this year. Surveys took place February-March. Out planting will take place in April and June. It is anticipated that more than 10,000 juvenile abalone will be out planted to at least 10 different recovery sites, 4 of which will be in Skagit County.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The MRC, WSU Beach Watchers, and Tulalip Tribes hosted an Earth Day beach clean-up at Mission beach on April 22, 2024, from 10 AM – 12 PM.
- A subset of the MRC is planning to resume monthly forage fish sampling at Howarth Park on April 27, 2024.

Whatcom – Mike MacKay

- On April 19, 2024, the MRC had their first Beach Seine with Kids at Boulevard Park with Lummi Nation School. 60 students were able to attend.
- The MRC is organizing the Wildcat Cove project to provide posters and cards to educate the public about the impacts of launching their boats on eelgrass.

Partner Updates

NW Straits Foundation: The NW Straits Foundation refreshed the Passport to Marine Adventure application through donor funding. Kayla Mrozik is working to update the application to share with the public. The NW Straits Foundation spring celebration is May 5, 2024, at the Edmonds Yacht club.

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. Cecilia also shared the film



Minutes

Fish Wars that was screened at the 50th anniversary of the Boldt Decision event will be premiering at the Seattle International Film Festival. Please visit this [website](#) for more information.

Puget Sound Partnership: Laura shared that Puget Sound Day on the Hill is from May 13-17, 2024, and they are looking forward to advocating for reauthorization and appropriations for the NW Straits Initiative.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.



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).

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



Minutes

live. If you are interested in viewing this presentation, please contact Caitlyn (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



Minutes

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



Minutes

- 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](#).



Minutes

- 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 5th and June 6th.



Minutes

June 28, 2024, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Jamie Stephens, Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Mike MacKay (Whatcom), Ken Collins (Island), Laura Bradstreet (Puget Sound Partnership), Ginny Broadhurst, Darla Smith (Skagit – Alternate), Alan Clark (Clallam), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Nan McKay, Julia Parrish, Cecilia Gobin, Karin Roemers-Klevin (San Juan – Alternate)

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

Others in Attendance: Chris Porter, Tevin Medley, Edline Francois, Rhiannon Colaci, Don Hunger, Keith Estes, Jude Apple, Sarah Fisken (Jefferson – Alternate)

Absent: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Christina Koons

Welcome and Introductions:

Tim opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

The May minutes were approved as written by consensus.

Lucas introduced and welcomed Jamie Stephens, the new gubernatorial appointee to the NW Straits Commission.

Athena Group Project Presentation: Tevin Medley and Athena Group shared a brief update of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion assessment survey, focus groups, and a project summary presentation. If you are interested in receiving the presentation link, please contact Caitlyn Blair (blair@nwstraits.org).

Speed Date with a Scientist - Ohop Creek Stormwater Management Pilot Project: Keith Estes from Long Live the Kings presented on the Ohop Creek stormwater management pilot project. The project tested the efficacy of using an above ground compost-based biofiltration system to collect and clean stormwater from roadway runoff. [Learn more about the Ohop Creek project](#) and please reach out to Keith (kestes@lltk.org) with any questions or requests for presentations to MRCs.



Minutes

Business Items

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

European green crab funding through the Department of Ecology budget request: Lucas shared that the Department of Ecology will be prioritizing a funding request for European Green Crab (EGC) research in the next biennium. This is separate from the NWS Commission's work on EGC. NWS will be talking with WDFW about continuing the funding they currently provide for NWS work in Drayton Harbor and Samish Bay in the next biennium.

July NW Straits Commission Meeting: Due to a scheduling conflict in Clallam County, the NW Straits Commission meeting on July 26 will now be held in Jefferson County at the Port Townsend Yacht Club from 10:00 – 3:00 PM. Please reach out to Caitlyn (blair@nwstraits.org) for any questions.

Project Updates

No-Anchor Zone Phase 2 Planning: Dana shared that the NW Straits Commission worked with a consultant to develop a social marketing strategy for the no-anchor zone project. In Phase 2 of this project, the NW Straits Commission will decide how to implement the social marketing strategies for the 2025 boating season.

DEI Phase 2 Planning: The NW Straits Commission staff is planning for Phase 2 of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work, following the work in Phase 1 completed in June. Several needs for DEI were identified in the survey results that Athena Group shared. An additional \$40,000 was budgeted in our FY22 NOAA award for this work, expiring in December 2024. The Commission moved and approved by consensus contract with the Athena Group for DEI Phase 2 in the amount of \$40,000.00.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: The Committee had a joint meeting with the NW Straits Foundation Executive Committee to discuss improving coordination and collaboration between the NW Straits Commission and the NW Straits Foundation. The Executive Committees agreed that the retreat planning process being done with ECO Resource Group and the September 19 retreat will be a good way to prioritize topics to address. The planning process has participants from the NWS Commission, Foundation, and MRCs.



Minutes

External Relations Committee: On June 18, 2024, U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), and U.S. Representative Rick Larsen (D-WA-02) reintroduced legislation to reauthorize the Northwest Straits Initiative. Reauthorization will recognize the Initiative as a federal program and acknowledge the importance of locally driven marine conservation. As Congress moves through the legislative process, we will keep you informed on the progress through the current session, which ends January 3, 2025. For additional information, please see our [Looking Ahead web page](#). NWS Commission staff, Commissioners, MRC members and partners are working together to plan a site visit for Senator Murray on July 16 to highlight the reauthorization bill at Padilla Bay.

Science Advisory Committee: The Committee had a productive meeting in person on June 26, 2024. The meeting focused on the structure of the MRC reports to create a simpler format to assist with MRCs and staff to move quickly through project reporting. The Committee also discussed the Science Advisory Committee session planned for the annual conference.

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark

- Clean Pacific oyster shell was spread at the Sequim Bay site for Olympia oyster restoration.
- Several MRC members attended an informational and listening workshop on marine carbon dioxide removal held by American University researchers.

Island – Ken Collins

- The MRC's most recent stewardship event took place at Hoypus Point and Cornet Bay. We began at Hoypus Point to address the encroaching weeds, then moved to Cornet Bay for additional weed removal. This year, the Canada Thistle infestation appears to be more severe at Cornet. We are collaborating with the Noxious Weed Coordinator to find solutions. This week, staff sprayed the thistle and plan to start watering next week.
- PSP Leadership Council: The local forum provided a fantastic opportunity for our MRC to showcase the work we've accomplished over the past year. Patrick Havel presented the Climate Change White Paper, while Jill Lipoti discussed the Shoreline Armoring Survey. Staff also shared updates on Cornet and Hoypus Point. Following the forum, Island MRC hosted a site visit to Cornet and Hoypus. It was a beautiful day, offering the perfect chance to highlight the importance of continued funding for maintaining the health of restoration sites after construction ends.

Jefferson – Sarah Fiskén



Minutes

- Olympia Oysters – 12 attendees counted live Olympia oysters in an oyster bed in south Discovery Bay. Volunteers counted oysters in 2'x2' quadrat subsections along a transect line, collecting a total of 60 samples over 4 hours.
- On June 26 the MRC hosted a crabbing 101 workshop.
- The MRC is working to recruit a student member to fill a position on the MRC.

San Juan – Karin Roemers-Klevin

- June marks the end of Jeff Dyer's time on the SJC MRC. He has been an important part of the committee, volunteering his time and expertise. His experience as a commercial captain brings keen insight to the MRC. Jeff is truly an all-star and we will sorely miss him. Interviews are underway to fill his seat, with several good prospects moving forward.
- Aerial surveys to study recreational boating density amongst sensitive habitats are underway for the summer. Systematic line-transect surveys will be flown at least twice per month between now and September. Through this project we hope to understand the connection between boater presence and activity on eelgrass habitat health and identify impact hotspots or priority sites for protection and/or restoration.

Skagit – Darla Gay Smith

- European Green Crab Molt Survey Training- June 15 at Padilla Bay: Hosted by Skagit MRC, Northwest Straits Commission, and Padilla Bay NERR. 23 people registered, only 6 attended. It was a very engaged group with lots of great questions!
- 2025 Skagit County Comp Plan Update- Stakeholder Interview with MRC: Teams meeting held June 21, attended by 6 MRC members. Interview took one hour. Thought provoking questions and discussions!

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The MRC will be doing crabber outreach at the Port of Everett on July 6 and 7.
- The MRC welcomes to Cassie Laney, the MRC's summer intern who will be working on creating a shoreline assessment framework!

Whatcom – Mike MacKay

- Mark Fairhart was appointed to the MRC on June 4, filling a Citizen-at-Large seat.
- Brigid Wills and Eleanor Hines (representing the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Citizen Stewardship Committee (CPAR CSC)) and Erica Bleke (representing Department of Natural Resources Aquatic Reserves Program (DNR ARP)) presented on the Cherry Point Intertidal Monitoring Program. Historically, RE Sources has provided support for these surveys, with the RE Sources' lead scientist and Aquatic Reserves Stewardship Coordinator AmeriCorps member providing coordination and training support. Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Citizen Stewardship Committee sees the value in continuing to collect this data and is looking for a new partner(s) in Whatcom County to provide funding, logistical, and additional scientific support. The MRC is assessing the possibility of taking



Minutes

on Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve intertidal monitoring as a project coordinator. A decision will be made by the end of summer.

Partner Updates

NW Straits Foundation: Don Hunger shared that there will be a celebration on July 1, 2024 for Jason Morgan's 10th year working at the NW Straits Foundation. The NW Straits Foundation is also working with Whatcom MRC on rain gardens and the eelgrass at Wildcat Cove. Don will be providing a NW Straits Foundation 101 presentation at the San Juan MRC meeting in July.

NW Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin shared that the Army Corps of Engineers amending their regional conditions to nationwide permits for shoreline stabilization activities. The Northwest Division will be accepting and approving the amended regional conditions, which would put more protection in place for forage fish.

Puget Sound Partnership: Laura Bradstreet shared that the Puget Sound Partnership submitted a letter of support for what Cecilia shared about the Army Corps of Engineers amendments to the regional conditions to permitting for shoreline stabilization activities. The Partnership met with Island MRC at their leadership council meeting earlier in June. Reauthorization. The Partnership recognized Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Senator Rick Larsen's (D-WA-02) reintroduction to legislation to reauthorize the NW Straits Initiative that was announced June 18, 2024. Laura also shared that Ahren and his partner delivered a healthy baby boy earlier this month, and Ahren will be on leave until August 6, 2024.

Public Comment: No public comment.



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).



Minutes

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



Minutes

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 5th. 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 18th.
- 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.



Minutes

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.



Minutes

- 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.



Minutes

August 23, 2024, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Jamie Stephens, Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Ken Collins (Island), Laura Bradstreet (Puget Sound Partnership), Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Elizabeth Lorence (Whatcom – Alternate), Nan McKay, Julia Parrish, Cecilia Gobin, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit)

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

Others in Attendance: Austin Rose, Sam Whitridge

Absent: Ginny Broadhurst, Mike MacKay (Whatcom), Christina Koons (San Juan)

Welcome and Introductions:

Tim opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

The July minutes were approved as written by consensus.

Committee Updates:

Science Advisory Committee: Julia shared that the Committee is in the process of creating a project final report template to share with all MRC staff. The Committee is also working to host a Social Science 101 virtual seminar, open to all MRC members. The seminar will be on October 2, 2024 from 4 PM – 5:30 PM: Understanding and Engaging Communities Using Social Sciences Seminar. The Committee is also working on the Science Advisory Committee session that will take place at the annual conference.

Executive Committee: Alan shared that the NW Straits Commission has received \$1 million for fiscal year 2024 from NOAA. The application will be submitted to NOAA by the Department of Ecology in early September with a January 1, 2025 start date. The Committee reported that the retreat planning committee continues to plan for the NW Straits 2024 Retreat, held at the La Conner Country Inn. The agenda is underway. The Committee has also been discussing group norms. Norms will be tested at the Executive Committee meetings, and proposed norms will be brought to the NW Straits Commission for review.

External Relations: Nan reported that the NWSI reauthorization bill is awaiting a vehicle to be attached to, which would allow it to move to a floor vote in the Senate. We'll be tracking progress



Minutes

on this through Senator Murray's office. Lucas attended a Congressional Staff tour in the San Juans, which highlighted some MRC projects like Jackson Beach. Representative Rick Larsen is visiting Skagit MRC next week. This visit will highlight a number of project partnerships, including those with Samish Indian Nation, Padilla Bay Reserve, and the Port of Anacortes.

Business Items:

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

NWSI Conference Registration: Registration for the 2024 NW Straits Initiative Conference is open. Please visit the [conference website](#) or contact Caitlyn Blair (info@nwstraits.org) if you have any questions.

Budget Update: Sasha shared a proposed budget and schedule for the NOAA FY24 programmatic funding in the amount of \$1 million, which is designed to push more funding to future years to help stabilize funding to MRCs. The Commission approved by consensus the proposed budget and schedule.

NW Straits Initiative Retreat: The retreat planning group has two planning meetings between now and the retreat on September 19. The agenda is in progress and more information will be available for participants leading up to the event.

Project Updates:

NW Straits Insider Roundup: Staff at the NW Straits Commission have developed a new internal email/mailer. The goals of this email are to streamline communication, consolidate information and stay connected for internal staff and members to learn about each other's work. The email will come from (info@nwstraits.org). The first iteration of the Insider Roundup will be in September.

Skagit Vessel Turn-In Event and Media Day: The Skagit County Vessel Turn-In Recycling Event began July 22, 2024, bringing previously approved vessels to site for deconstruction and recycling. Fifty vessels applied to be a part of this recycling event! To highlight the turn-in event, project partners, special guests and members of the media gathered at La Conner Maritime Service in early August for a media day. The media day event was an opportunity to showcase the amazing collaborative work by all the project partners.

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark



Minutes

- MRC member Tim Cochnauer, with assistance from other MRC members and staff, made an annual presentation on August 5 to the Clallam County Board of Commissioners on the MRC's work and interest in taking a more active advisory role.
- The MRC designed and printed a new poster focusing on marine biotoxins and their effect on public health.
- A schedule was set for the kelp kayaking monitoring season, with surveys in August and September at Freshwater Bay and Clallam Bay.

Island – Ken Collins

- Our MRC has recommended a new member to the Board of Island County Commissioners to approve to serve on the MRC. We should find out in the next few weeks if the approval goes through. We had another Camano resident interested and anticipate them applying soon.
- MRC volunteers joined Washington State Parks and various other organizations to share with families about nature. The booth was set up to show families forage fish eggs with microscopes and learn about the forage fish lifecycle along with their importance in the food web. Over 100 students visited the MRC booth.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- "Local Youth" MRC member interviewed and accepted, joining us starting 9/3.
- Shoreline Landowner project – Sarah Fiskien met with Lisa Kaufman at NWSF (Shore Friendly) to do a beach walk/site visit at Shine Tidelands on August 5.

San Juan – Sam Whitridge

- August 20th will be the Natural Resources Agencies' Congressional Staff tour to San Juan Island. The Department of Natural Resources Staff will share about collaboration amongst the MRC, the NWSC and PSP to remove 132 creosote pilings from Jackson's beach, improving habitat and water quality.
- Adam Parrot will take over as MRC Chair from Christina Koons. The MRC is grateful to Christina for her service and looks excited to see Adam take on this role.
- Summertime outreach continues with dock talks on Orcas Island and tabling at the San Juan County Fair. As well as research through aerial surveys, shore-based vessel counts, and benthic habitat survey work.

Skagit – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

- **Bowman Bay Stewardship Event**- held July 25th with 3 NW Straits Foundation staff, 2 Skagit MRC members and staff, 6 Foundation Board Members, and 5 volunteers. We successfully spread the remainder of the mulch throughout zones 3 and 4, and substantially cut back the blackberry from the landward side of zone 6 in hopes to minimize it's spread into the restoration site.



Minutes

- **Vessel Turn-In Event:** The Vessel Turn-In Event took place July 22 - Aug 16. Media day took place August 1 with project partners and several elected officials and media outlets in attendance. The La Conner Maritime team was very efficient in deconstructing over 43 vessels! A special Thanks goes to Dana, Catey and Melissa for planning and coordinating and successfully getting 50 boats signed up! Recent article in the NWSI newsletter and in the Skagit Valley Herald.
- **Fidalgo Bay Trestle Project Community Meeting- Aug 1:** The City of Anacortes hosted the first community meeting with stakeholders including Skagit MRC and Samish DNR, on August 1 at the Anacortes Library. The City provided an overview of the project and the stakeholders shared perspectives. The MRC coordinated and hosted the stakeholder communications team kickoff meeting on Aug 15th to start working on content and messaging for the interpretive signage.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The MRC is currently reviewing a draft of the 2025-2030 Snohomish MRC Strategic Plan. A final draft is expected in September.
- A Marine Vegetation outreach event is being planned by the Snohomish MRC in Edmonds. The event will occur on October 12.

Whatcom – Elizabeth Lorence

- Northwest Straits Foundation interns, Alex Haase and Dylan Trainer, have been continuing to engage with boaters utilizing the boat ramp at Wildcat Cove. Alex and Dylan have been interacting with boat launch users at the Cove, collecting observational data, and educating cove users about intertidal organisms, invasive species, and eelgrass environments.
- Whatcom MRC has completed bull kelp monitoring surveys at Alden Bank, Aiston Preserve, and Cherry Point/Gulf Road and plans to survey Southwest Lummi Island and Point Whitehorn later this month.

Partner Updates

Puget Sound Partnership: Laura joined the Congressional staff tour this August. The Puget Sound Partnership continues to advocate for reauthorization of the NW Straits Commission. The partnership is also interested in obtaining federal funding to remove federal derelict vessels from the Puget Sound.

Public Comment: No public comment.



Minutes

September 27, 2024, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Kirk Larsen (Island - Alternate), Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit), Karin Roemers-Kleven (San Juan - Alternate)

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

Others in Attendance: Julieta Martinelli, Austin Rose, Kelsea Ballantyne

Absent: Ginny Broadhurst, Christina Koons (San Juan), Nan McKay, Jamie Stephens, Cecilia Gobin, Julia Parrish, Mike MacKay (Whatcom)

Welcome and Introductions:

Tim opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

There was not a quorum of members in attendance to approve the August meeting minutes. The August and September minutes will be brought to the December NW Straits Commission meeting for approval.

Speed Date with a Scientist: Olympia Oyster Restoration – Summary of 2012-2020 and Future Plans

Julieta Martinelli, the Olympia Oyster Program Lead with WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), provided a presentation highlighting regional Olympia Oyster Restoration with a focus on MRC contributions in WA as our featured [Speed Date with a Scientist](#). Julieta (julieta.martinelli@dfw.wa.gov) is available to meet with MRCs interested in discussing sites and education and outreach opportunities in partnership with WDFW.

Business Items:

Staff provided updates on the following business items:



Minutes

NWSI Conference Registration: Caitlyn shared that the annual NW Straits Initiative conference registration closes on October 15. Please visit the [conference website](#) for registration, hotel reservations, and information about the agenda and speakers.

2025-2027 MRC Grant Timeline: Sasha shared a draft timeline for the next two-year MRC grant cycle, which is anticipated to be similar in design and format to the current cycle where MRCs will submit project proposals that will result in two separate grant agreements, one beginning in October 2025 and another in January 2026. MRC representatives should share the timeline with their MRC, and plan to begin discussing project ideas in the December 2024 – January 2025 timeframe.

NW Straits Initiative Retreat: Lucas provided a debrief on the NW Straits Initiative Retreat that was held on September 19. ECO Resource Group was contracted to help plan and facilitate the retreat. As part of the planning, ECO performed confidential interviews and surveys to identify areas of focus for the retreat. One of the themes highlighted in ECO's research was a desire to build clarity around the structure/infrastructure of the NWS Initiative. The retreat planning group reviewed the original NWSI authorization bill and reauthorization bill to determine how the structure of the NWSI is described. As a result, the Retreat Planning Group proposed this definition:

"The NWS Initiative is a community led collaboration working to protect and restore the marine environment of northwest Washington. It is composed of the NWS Commission and seven locally based Marine Resources Committees who identify and address priority NWS marine conservation issues through internal and external partnerships, coordination, and funding."

At the retreat, it was pointed out that this definition is different from NWS Initiative marketing materials and the "three-legged stool" analogy that has been used to date, which describe the NWS Initiative as the NWSC, NWSF, and MRCs. The proposed definition is meant to clarify the NWS Initiative operational structure.

Retreat attendees also discussed strategies for having effective partnerships between the NWSC, NWSF, and MRCs. There was discussion at the retreat on if the NWSC and NWSF have shared goals and "strategic" partnerships. Retreat attendees then participated in small group work and facilitated exercises to identify strategies and action items that might help with future partnerships. Priority strategies (in bold) and supportive actions identified at the retreat included:



Minutes

- **Each organization figure out what they want to be when they grow up and share what that is.**
 - Create separate NWSF and NWSC strategic plans
 - Share the strategic plans with each other
 - Identify shared goals from the plans
- **Have the Foundation establish Liaisons to MRCs**
 - The gist of this was to build ongoing connections between the NWSF and MRCs
 - It was also recommended that defining the purpose of liaisons would be important (what gap are they filling?)
- **Joint project reviews and information sharing**
 - NWSF share their project lists and program updates with NWSC
 - NWSC share MRC project lists with NWSF
 - Create a system for sharing this information
- **Celebrate, joint meetings, lunch dates, cocktails**
 - Celebrate collaborations—specifically at conference
 - Informal get togethers
 - Neighboring MRCs hold joint meetings
 - Rotate celebrations across all counties
 - NWSF and MRCs jointly host celebratory public events (carefully)

The above strategies were suggestions only. Consensus on these strategies was not measured. Lucas is working to schedule a debrief meeting with the retreat planning group to talk about which of the above strategies are feasible given each organization's capacity. The Executive Committee will discuss whether to start a NWSC strategic planning process. They will also talk about how/if the Commission should move forward with the proposed definition and what it would mean for other areas of our work, such as communications and messaging.

After the Commission meeting, Lucas was informed that one strategy was missing from those presented at the Commission meeting. That missing item is included below:

Foundation Gives Operational Briefings

- Collect feedback about this process a year from now (NWSF 101s)
- 101 presentations – Foundation goes to each MRC for a briefing annually
- In addition to presenting at MRCs: Record the presentation and provide it to MRCs
- Adopt a uniform project agreement for MRCs to use when requesting Foundation support
- Reevaluate w/ MRCs if functioning – structure and frequency?



Minutes

- Work to include about specific kinds of projects or priorities would foundation be willing to entertain – boundaries and project partner needs
- MRCs have quarterly spot on meetings for Foundation updates

Project Updates:

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI): Allie reminded Commissioners to take a look at the DEI Summary Report by Athena Group, which can be found in the NW Straits Commission [Resource Library](#). The NW Straits Commission is working with Athena Group on Phase 2 of the DEI project. For Phase 2, we are building on Phase 1 by evaluating DEI implementation tools that will assist MRCs and the NWSC with integrating DEI practices into regular operations. Athena Group has invited MRC members to join a DEI learning cohort. The cohort will work toward the selection and practice of tools that will work best for MRCs. Please reach out to Caitlyn (blair@nwstraits.org) by October 4 if you are interested in joining the learning cohort or would like more information.

European Green Crab: Leah and Allie have been trapping in Drayton Harbor and Samish Bay. There was an increase in captures of young crabs this year. The NW Straits Commission has been working with volunteers and partners from WA Department of Natural Resources, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife, and WA Conservation Corps to trap in these areas. WA Department of Fish and Wildlife just released the [European Green Crab 2025 – 2031 management plan for Washington](#).

Website Update: Jessica gave a quick overview of the recent maintenance work on MRC websites. The work focused on six MRC websites, excluding Skagit MRC, as they are on a much older version of the website, which will need more attention. All six updated sites are live as of this summer. Skagit is expected to be integrated and launched soon. The NW Straits Commission website will be last to be updated and launched.

Committee Updates:

Science Advisory Committee: Dana shared that the Science Advisory Committee is hosting a Social Science Seminar: Understanding and Engaging Communities Using Social Sciences on October 2 from 4 PM – 5:30 PM. All MRCs and staff, and NW Straits members are invited. Please e-mail Dana (oster@nwstraits.org) for the calendar invitation, and find the Zoom Link [here](#).

Executive Committee: Alan shared that the Committee discussed the definition of the NW Straits Initiative that was proposed at the retreat. The Committee was supportive of the definition. The Committee also talked about the draft meeting norms that were informed by the Phase 1 DEI



Minutes

Summary Report. The Executive Committee plans to propose these and other meeting norms for discussion at a future NWS Commission meeting.

External Relations: Lucas shared that a follow up meeting with Senator Murray's staff will come soon to get an update on where the reauthorization bill is in the Congressional process. The state legislative session begins January 13, 2025 and ends April 27, 2025. We will be watching for legislation that intersects with NWS Commission work.

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark

- The MRC designed and printed a new order of outreach cards in five new designs: pinto abalone, phytoplankton toxins, impacts of dogs at Elwha Beach, Dungeness Bay, and a decorator crab.
- The pigeon guillemot monitoring season concluded mid-September, with prey deliveries extending later into the season than usual.
- The MRC conducted two kelp surveys at Freshwater Bay in late August and early September.

Island – Kirk Larsen

- Welcome the MRCs newest member, Jeff Wheeler.
- The MRC is currently planning for the Shoreline Workshop they will be hosting on October 5th. The Shoreline Armoring Report and Permit Analysis has been completed. The Planning Department at Island County has reviewed the report and have given us approval to move forward. The report can now be shared widely.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- 9/5-8 – Wooden Boat Festival was a great success! We had 300 visitors at our tabling booth and 1403 visitors at our speaker series tent. The speaker series tent was a new outreach initiative for our MRC this year, and we partnered with WA Sea Grant and the Port Townsend Marine Science Center (PTMSC) to invite 21 speakers to present over 3 days, on topics ranging from derelict crab pots, to orcas of Port Townsend and the ecology of a whale fall, to sustainable fishing and boating practices. The success of this event is thanks to our amazing MRC volunteers, and our project lead Betsy Carlson! All hands were on deck for this 3-day event to help staff the tabling booth, act as emcees to introduce our presenters, provide tech assistance, and lead a morning hands-on plankton microscope activity.
- Project lead Neil Harrington visited Discovery Bay oyster restoration sites to do a visual survey of recruitment, found successful Olympia oyster settlers on Olympia oyster shell – past settlement has primarily been seen on Pacific oyster shell.



Minutes

San Juan – Karin Roemers-Kleven

- The Fall Great Islands Cleanup is scheduled to happen on September 21 with events happening across Orcas, Lopez, Shaw, and San Juan Islands. This fall we are raising awareness about microplastics and focusing on gathering debris both big and small!
- Summer research projects including aerial surveys, vessel counts, and benthic habitat surveys, as well as summer boating outreach projects are wrapping up. We are compiling data and summarizing efforts for Q4 reporting.

Skagit – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

- **Fidalgo Bay Day**-(Aug 24): Despite the cold rainy weather, we had another successful Fidalgo Bay Day event. An estimated 300 attendees (just a little less than last year), 35 participating organizations, 31 Discovery Passport Outreach Stations (a new record), 155 Passport Booklets handed out, over 30 volunteers (much fewer than usual), and 5 local businesses supported the event this year. The Anacortes American published a recent [article](#) about the event.
- **Rep Larsen's Visit**- (Aug 27): The NWSC, NWSF, Padilla Bay, Samish Indian Nation, and Skagit MRC co-hosted a visit with Rep Larsen and his staff at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. We highlighted the NWS Initiative Reauthorization bill and shared several examples of our partnerships and collaborative work in marine conservation. Larsen participated in the beach seining activity with Kids on the Beach led by Annie England with Padilla Bay and Samish DNR staff.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The MRC and WSU Beach Watchers hosted an ETAP beach cleanup event at Mukilteo Lighthouse Park on September 21.
- The Marine Ecology Internship for 2024 concluded in September and Cassie completed her project, a Shoreline Health Assessment protocol. The MRC thanks Cassie for her work!

Whatcom – Austin Rose

- The MRC will be hosting an educational booth at SeaFeast in Bellingham on Saturday, October 5th.
- The MRC will be conducting additional water quality sampling at North Chuckanut Bay over the coming year starting in September. Additional samples for eDNA analysis will be taken at priority sites that have demonstrated consistently high fecal coliform levels over the past years.
- The MRC participated in a site visit at Clayton Beach on September 13th with Governor Jay Inslee, and project affiliates. The purpose of the visit was to discuss the scope and cost of the restoration project, which includes removing over 1,300 linear ft of rock armor,



Minutes

pilings, and debris and filling a 14-acre offshore dredge hole to restore critical eelgrass habitat.

Public Comment: No public comment.