



Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission

Date: May 30, 2025

Time: 10:30 AM- 3:00 PM

Location: Dungeness River Nature Center, West Hendrickson Road, Sequim, WA

We acknowledge the lands we're on today are the ancestral and current homelands of Indigenous Nations who have stewarded them since time immemorial. We respect their sovereignty, support their Treaty rights, their right to self-determination, and we honor their sacred spiritual connection with the land and water. These Indigenous Nations include the Jamestown S'Klallam, Lower Elwha Klallam, Lummi, Makah, Nooksack, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Samish, Stillaguamish, Swinomish, and Tulalip Tribes.

Today we are on the ancestral and current homelands of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe.

Documents for NW Straits Commission Review:

- April Meeting Minutes
- Draft NWS Commission Strategic Plan

10:30 – 10:40 AM	Welcome and introductions Tribal acknowledgement April Meeting Minutes Approval	Alan Clark, Chair
10:40 – 10:55 AM	Welcome to the Dungeness and Tribal Comments	Hansi Hals, NR Director Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
10:55 – 11:10 AM	Remarks from Clallam County Commissioner	Randy Johnson, District 2
11:10 – 11:25 AM	Blue Schools Initiative Presentation	Jake Beattie, NW Maritime Center
11:25 – 11:55 AM	Identify, Investigate, Integrate, Inform: MRCs as Advisory Bodies	LaTrisha Suggs, Clallam MRC Chair



**Northwest
Straits**
COMMISSION

agenda

11:55 – 12:45 PM	Working Lunch <i>Lunch provided for Commissioners, agenda presenters, and NWSC Staff.</i>	
12:45 – 1:20 PM	MRC Reports	
1:20 – 2:10 PM	Draft Strategic Plan Interactive Review	Lucas Hart
2:10 – 2:25 PM	Committee Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Science Advisory Committee• Executive Committee• External Relations Committee	Emily Grason Jamie Stephens Elsa Schwartz
2:25 – 2:35 PM	Business Items <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Website Update• Conference Save the Date November 7 & 8• MRC Grant Proposals	Jessica Owens Caitlyn Blair Sasha Horst
2:35 – 2:50 PM	Project Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• WA Kelp Project Inventory• Anchor Out of Eelgrass	Jeff Whitty Dana Oster & Jessica Owens
2:50 – 2:55 PM	Commissioner Updates Puget Sound Partnership	
2:55 – 3:00 PM	Public Comment and Partner Updates	
3:00 PM	Adjourn	

The next regularly scheduled NW Straits Commission meeting will be Friday, June 27, 2025, virtually over Zoom. Please see the [NWSC events page](#) for more information about our meetings.



Minutes

April 25, 2025, 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Christina Koons (San Juan), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Ken Collins (Island), Rick Beauregard (Whatcom), Jamie Stephens, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit), Emily Grason, Ginny Broadhurst

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

Others in Attendance: Rayme Ivers, Sarah Fisker (Jefferson – Alternate)

Absent: Elsa Schwartz, Cecilia Gobin (Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission), Larry Epstein (Puget Sound Partnership)

Welcome and Introductions

Tim opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

The Commission approved the February 2025 meeting minutes as written by consensus.

NW Straits Commission Chair and vice-Chair Elections

Alan Clark was elected chair and Jamie Stephens was elected the vice-chair of the NW Straits Commission. Many thanks to Tim Ellis, outgoing chair, for his service the last two years.

Committee Updates

Science Advisory Committee: Emily Grason shared that the Committee will be meeting virtually at the end of April, and in person in June. The Committee is preparing for project proposal review and the MRC project consultations. At the June meeting the Committee will review a selection of MRC project proposals. Kathy Wolf will be stepping down at the end of June; we appreciate her service on the Committee.

External Relations Committee: Lucas shared that Senator Murray and Representative Larsen have reintroduced the reauthorization bill. For updates about reauthorization, visit the NW Straits Commission [website](#). Lucas also shared that he is working with the Department of Ecology to evaluate contingency options for future funding. In April, Lucas, Alan, and Jamie updated state electees on NW Straits Commission and MRC projects.



Minutes

The NW Straits Commission signed onto a letter supporting HB 1631, which establishes bull kelp as the Washington state marine forest. The bill highlights the importance of bull kelp to marine ecosystems and regional cultures. The bill passed and was signed by Governor Ferguson on April 16, 2025. For more information, see the [King 5 Article](#).

Executive Committee: Alan Clark shared that at the March meeting, the Committee discussed Puget Sound Day on the Hill. Reauthorization is among the priorities and includes a \$10 million annual appropriations request as a placeholder. NW Straits Commission staff outlined talking points, and Puget Sound Partnership organized sign on letters; Tim Ellis signed the Day on the Hill letters on behalf of the NWSC after Executive Committee approval. The Committee also discussed NW Straits Commission strategic planning, which will be discussed in greater detail at the May NW Straits Commission meeting. Other updates from the committee included: The NW Straits Commission submitted comments on the Shoreline Management Act rules related to kelp conservation during open comment period; Commission meeting agendas have been restructured to capture time for designated Commission seats (Puget Sound Partnership and NW Indian Fisheries Commission). Updates from all others will be captured in the Public comment/partners section. A recommendation was brought forward that the Executive Committee serve as the nomination committee for the NW Straits Commission Environmental Leadership Award. The Commission approved by consensus.

Business Items

Staff gave updates on the following business items:

NW Straits Commission Norms for Courageous Conversations: Allie shared that the norms for courageous conversations were updated, and can be viewed in the [Knowledge Base](#). NW Straits Commission staff created an agreement acknowledging that the Commission will adhere to the norms. This will be brought in hard copy to be signed by Commission members at a future in-person meeting.

May Meeting – in-person in Clallam County: Caitlyn shared that the May meeting will be held at the Dungeness River Nature Center in Clallam County. Staff and others will be providing options for carpooling from Port Townsend to Sequim. Stay tuned for more information in the coming weeks about travel times and ferry information and contact info@nwstraits.org If you have questions. We look forward to seeing you there!

MRC Grants: Sasha and Dana have held consultations with each MRC about their project proposals. The due date for MRC proposals is May 29.



Minutes

Project Updates

Kelp Kayak Kickoff and Safety Training: There will be two Kayak Kickoffs for 2025 MRC kelp monitoring volunteers, the first will be at Padilla Bay from 10:00 – 2:00 PM on May 2, and the second one will be at the WSU Jefferson County Extension Office in Port Hadlock from 1:00 – 4:00 PM on May 14. There will be three kayak safety trainings for MRC kelp monitoring volunteers at Bowman Bay, Fidalgo Island on May 31 and June 1, and at North Beach, Port Townsend on June 7 (two classes per day). Registration has closed for all events but if you have any questions or would like to attend a safety training, please contact Jeff Whitty (whitty@nwstraits.org) right away.

Impact Report: The 2024 Impact Report is being shared widely and is the second most visited page on the NW Straits Commission website. If you are interested in sharing the report, please visit the [website](#) or contact Jessica Owens (owens@nwstraits.org).

Green Crab: Allie shared that staff and Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) have started seasonal trapping for European green crab in Drayton Harbor and Samish Bay. They are working with the Department of Fish and Wildlife to train technicians to trap crabs using NW Straits Commission protocol at Drayton Harbor. The WCC crew was trained to trap in Samish Bay. Department of Fish and Wildlife has caught 32 Green crabs including 2 gravid females. WCC captured 6 green crab including multiple molts, and Taylor Shellfish caught 4 for a total of 10 crabs. They set around 300 traps in Drayton Harbor and 200 in Samish Bay.

Retreat Debrief

Lucas shared some updates and reflections from the retreat. Consultants provided a draft report that will be circulated to the Strategic Planning Committee, and then to the NW Straits Commission. The draft plan contains the mission, vision, purpose, values, strategic goals, objectives, and actions that came out of the retreat. The NW Straits Commission will plan to review the draft at the May NW Straits Commission meeting.

MRC Reports

Clallam MRC – Alan Clark

- The MRC hosted a HAZWOPER refresher and oiled wildlife response training on April 15 and 16.
- The MRC shared an advisory letter with County Commissioners regarding shoreline armoring in the 3 Crabs Rd area.
- Alan Clark gave a presentation to the Sequim Bay Yacht Club on April 9, explaining what the Clallam MRC is and works on.



Minutes

Island MRC – Ken Collins

- Camano 101 is one of the MRC's favorite opportunities to connect with the Camano Island community. Volunteers had engaging conversations with attendees and enjoyed the chance to network with other environmental programs at the event.
- The MRC joined the Woodhaven High School class to teach students how to identify local forage fish egg species. The students were incredibly curious and did an excellent job documenting their findings—some even sketched detailed drawings of the different eggs they discovered! The MRC is excited to continue this partnership and inspire more local students to explore and learn about marine science.

Jefferson MRC – Jeff Taylor

- The Olympia oyster restoration team emptied 1,500 bags of Pacific oyster shell at the Discovery Bay Powerline site.
- The Searching for Seaweed Workshop was held on April 4, 16 participants attended.

San Juan MRC – Christina Koons

- The Spring Great Islands Cleanup is scheduled for April – 4/12 on Lopez Island and 4/26 on Orcas, San Juan, and Shaw islands.
- MRC members and staff participated in a North Sound Marine Vegetation Brown Bag Luncheon on April 2 to hear about the latest implementation strategy from the Habitat Leads who use these strategies to guide investments and steer conservation and recovery projects. Learning about different strategies and hearing what projects are happening across the North Sound was inspirational and a great opportunity to collaborate for greater impact.
- Salmon Recovery Site Visits were on April 3 and 4, where MRC members learn in depth about potential salmon recovery projects and act as the Citizens Advisory Group to rank and score projects for the socioeconomic merits.

Skagit MRC – Lynne Wenberg

- **Bowman Bay Beach Seining:** On April 7, Bowman Bay beach seiners caught 831 chum in one day! It exceeded the total annual counts from previous sampling years.
- **Native Oyster Restoration StoryMap:** Now available on the Skagit MRC website homepage: [click here](#)
- **Forage Fish Surveys:** After 13 years of leading the forage fish surveys, project lead Pete Haase officially handed the baton over to Catherine Houck. Pete will continue to be the Skagit MRC's Project Lead while Catherine is learning the ropes.
- **2025 Salish Sea Stewards Graduation Celebration- April 29!** Victor Garcia, one of the new volunteers in the 2025 Salish Sea Stewards Training program and an active forage fish survey volunteer, was recently appointed by the Governor to serve on the Washington



Minutes

State Fish and Wildlife Commission for a six-year term. The Commission oversees the fish and wildlife rules and regulations.

Snohomish MRC – Tim Ellis

- The MRC 2024 Annual Report is available on the Snohomish County MRC [website](#).
- The MRC presented their Annual Report to County Council on April 15 and is planning to follow up to the Council with recommendations.

Whatcom MRC – Rick Beauregard

- The MRC will be hosting the first Beach Seine with Kids event on April 22nd with Harmony Elementary School.
- On March 31, staff with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund conducted a reconnaissance survey in Drayton Harbor to identify key habitat features, target species, and assess the general distribution of Olympia oysters at selected sites in Drayton Harbor. The goal of this survey was to inform the MRC about Olympia oyster restoration possibilities within Drayton Harbor.

Commissioner Updates

There were no Commissioner updates.

Public Comment and Partner Updates

There was no public comment.



Commission staff highlights - [May 2025]

MRC Support

2025-27 MRC Grants: Project proposals for the 2025-27 MRC grant cycle have been submitted. Thanks to the project leads and MRC staff for their work in completing those. Commission staff are currently compiling them to share a selection of proposals with the Science Advisory Committee for review.

MRC Meeting Attendance:

Sasha and Dana attended the Island MRC meeting 5/6

Jeff attended the Skagit MRC meeting 5/8

Sasha and Jeff attended the Clallam MRC meeting 5/19

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: Staff met the Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Committee to help shape coordination efforts for 2025-2026. Staff met one-on-one with Tribal, federal, non-profit, and international kelp partners and potential partners to listen to their interests in kelp conservation and recovery and discuss potential collaborations.

Kelp Monitoring: Staff held the 2025 Kayak Kickoff for MRC volunteers at Padilla Bay NERR in Mount Vernon (May 2) and at the WSU Extension Classroom in Port Hadlock (May 14), which a total of **Kelp Monitoring:** Staff held the 2025 Kayak Kickoff at Padilla Bay NERR in Mount Vernon (May 2) and at the WSU Extension Classroom in Port Hadlock (May 14), to train volunteers on the kayak protocol. 34 volunteers attended in person and others attended online.

European Green Crab: Staff submitted a grant proposal with PBNERR for additional project funds from NOAA through WDFW and presented the proposal to the Green Crab Multi-Agency Coordination group. Field work in Samish Bay and Drayton Harbor is ongoing with support from WDFW and WCC crews. They have captured a total of 163 green crabs in Drayton Harbor and 12 green crabs in Samish Bay. A Veteran's Conservation Corps member will be starting with NWSC on June 2nd to assist with green crab field work. Staff are awaiting updates on the status of the WCC program continuing after June 30th, due to federal cuts to the AmeriCorps program. Staff held a Molt Search training for Skagit Conservation District volunteers on 5/7. Staff also attended Green Crab Multi-Agency Coordination Group meeting on 5/14 and the North Puget Sound Green Crab Regional Coordination Group meeting on 5/21.



Commission staff highlights - [May 2025]

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: Staff held a Transboundary Eelgrass Protection Workgroup meeting to convene partners on no-anchor zone implementation coordination and discussion. Staff also are developing a social media plan for the Anchor Out of Eelgrass for Safety and Salmon campaign and placing ads in digital magazines and newsletters with 48degrees north and Waggoner Cruise guide.

Derelict Vessels: The multi-partner planning team began advertising for the Whatcom County vessel turn-in recycling event planned for this summer. The team continues to work towards sorting out logistics for the event. Additional planning also continues with WA Dept of Natural Resources and Makah Tribe on the opportunity for a vessel recycling event in Neah Bay later in 2025.

SoundIQ: Staff are working on launching the new SoundIQ to improve usability and showcase the breadth of work happening across the Northwest Straits Commission and Marine Resources Committees. This interactive map-based tool to explore projects of the Commission and MRCs will have a redesigned layout and improved visuals. The update makes it easier for the public, decision-makers, and researchers to explore the NW Straits region's marine resource data. Launching soon.

Forage Fish: Staff coordinated a large delivery of samples from Skagit, Whatcom, and Island counties to WDFW. Data from those samples will be added to upcoming tracking spreadsheets from WDFW staff as they are able to process the samples. WDFW hosts a WCC crew that supports lab processing for MRC forage fish samples, and they are also awaiting more information regarding the future of the program due to cuts to AmeriCorps at the federal level.

Operations

Staff: An applicant for a Veterans Conservation Corps internship to support European green crab work was interviewed and offered the position. They will begin in early June. This internship program is a partnership between Washington Department of Veterans Affairs and NOAA.

Budget: The FY24 NOAA funding is still in pending status and has not yet been awarded. It had an original start date of April 1. The 2025-27 state biennial budget was passed by the legislature with the MRC funding intact.

Communications: Staff are currently working with WaTech to rebuild our website on a new platform. We hope to kick off the project this spring.



Commission staff highlights - [May 2025]

Contracts and grants: The contract with Communication Resources for strategic plan and retreat support was completed and closed. An agreement with WaTech for an updated NW Straits Commission website is in the process of being developed.

Broad Community Engagement: NWSC and MRC staff met to discuss the importance of communicating with clarity and exploring best outreach practices. This included discussion on how to ensure community members with accessibility challenges or languages barriers are included in our communication and outreach efforts.

Other Meetings Attended

- Kelp Forest Alliance Workshop (5/4) - Jeff
- Jefferson MRC Public Kelp Presentation (5/15) - Jeff
- Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Committee meeting (5/23) - Jeff
- Ecosystem Coordination Board meeting 5/8 - Dana
- Conference for Participatory Sciences 5/27-5/29 - Dana
- Transboundary Eelgrass Protection Workgroup 5/8 - Allie

May 30, 2025 NWS Commission strategic plan exercise

The NW Straits Commission will be reviewing its draft strategic plan at the May 30 meeting. We will have the mission, vision, purpose, strategic goals, and actions from the draft plan posted throughout the room. Commissioners and staff will be given time to consider if there are major flaws in the plan or if there are minor edits needed to improve the flow, grammar, and punctuation. We will then come back to the larger group to discuss thoughts. Ahead of the meeting, please review the draft plan below, which is the outcome of significant effort of NW Straits Commissioners, staff, and MRC staff. Thank you!

Following the Commission meeting, staff will incorporate edits and begin drafting implementation plan components such as timelines and metrics for the action items. We will also be holding a plan review meeting with MRC staff. We aim to seek Commission approval of the plan at the June Commission meeting.



Northwest Straits

2025 - 2030 Strategic Plan

April 2025

Strategic Plan Purpose

The purpose of the NW Straits Commission strategic plan is to serve as an internal document that informs how we prioritize our work and allocate resources over the coming five years. The strategic plan is accompanied by a NW Straits Commission staff implementation plan that operationalizes the actions in service to our strategic goals. An external facing communications document outlines high level aspects of the strategic plan as an educational tool to inform partners and others interested in our work (**Note: the implementation plan and external facing communications plan will be drafted after strategic plan approval**).

The NW Straits Commission was founded to provide coordination, technical, and financial support to the NW Straits Marine Resources Committees (MRC) while also connecting local priorities to regional initiatives. The strategic goals, actions and other elements of the plan are focused on advancing the NW Straits Commission's work in these areas. Because this plan is meant to address NW Straits Commission operational and organizational functions, the NW Straits Commission looks to MRCs to set independent priorities and strategic goals as they see fit. The goals and actions in this plan aim to support that endeavor.

This plan was created over a six-month process that included input from NW Straits Commissioners, NW Straits Commission staff, and MRC staff. The plan was approved by the NW Straits Commission on XXXXX.

Throughout this plan, "MRC" refers to MRC staff and members. NW Straits Commission refers to Commission staff and Commissioners unless otherwise specified.

The Northwest Straits region includes the U.S. marine waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the San Juan Islands and northern Puget Sound reaching from the southern borders of Snohomish and Jefferson counties to the Canadian border

Vision, Mission, and Values

The Vision, Mission, and Values statements form the 'basis of decision' for the strategic goals, objectives, and actions of this plan.

Purpose

Engaging communities to protect and restore the NW Straits marine ecosystem.

Vision

A resilient and thriving ecosystem where communities are valued as stewards of local marine resources for current and future generations.

Mission

We protect and restore the marine waters, habitats, and species of the NW Straits region by supporting Marine Resources Committees and advancing their community-driven priorities.

Values

- **Community:** Our work is anchored in community-driven needs and solutions.
- **Ingenuity:** We bring curiosity, innovation, and scientific rigor to problem solving.

- **Collaboration:** We value collaboration and consensus-based decision making.
- **Conviction:** We bring passion, optimism, and a steadfast commitment to meet the challenges of a changing marine ecosystem.
- **Integrity:** We strive to be accountable, trusted, transparent, and respectful.
- **Environment:** We value the land and ocean, the resources they provide and the communities, past and present, who continue to steward them.

DRAFT

Summary of Strategic Goals

Goals are broad statements that codify the organization’s aspirations for each pillar. While the pillars define a category of aspiration and associated actions, goals define the strategic direction for our organization.

Staff and Volunteers

Strategic Goal

NW Straits Commission fosters a collaborative, supportive environment where Commission staff, MRC staff, members, and volunteers work together to advance our mission and achieve our goals.

Funding

Strategic Goal

NW Straits Commission secures long-term, sustainable funding to support and enable the work of NW Straits Commission and MRCs.

Amplify Stewardship and Innovation

Strategic Goal

NW Straits Commission amplifies the visibility and positive impact of MRCs and NW Straits Commission to conserve and restore marine ecosystems.

MRCs

Strategic Goal

NW Straits Commission supports MRC leadership of innovative approaches that advance locally prioritized stewardship and advisory solutions.

Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Actions by Pillar

Each strategic goal has associated strategic objectives and actions. Objectives granularly break down each goal's aspirations, and targeted actions outline steps to achieve them. Actions must be specific, measurable, and achievable.

Each action will have an assigned champion to direct, guide, and support the work. Priority actions have already been assigned champions. Those actions without designated champions will initiate after the first wave of priority actions.

Pillar 1: Staff and Volunteers

Strategic Goal 1

NW Straits Commission fosters a collaborative, supportive environment where NW Straits Commission staff, MRC staff, members, and volunteers work together to advance our mission and achieve our goals.

Strategic Objective 1.1

NW Straits Commission recruits and retains the right talent to meet our goals and objectives.

Actions 1.1.1

Maintaining a welcoming work environment that follows the established group norms.

Actions 1.1.2

Creating positions and job descriptions that accurately portray the roles and responsibilities aligned with job duties.

Actions 1.1.3

NW Straits Commission to identify broad recruitment audiences using tools such as the Community Connectivity Analysis (CCA).

Actions 1.1.4

NW Straits Commission explores how to incorporate more structured mentorship for staff to advance skill development.

Strategic Objective 1.2

NW Straits Commission facilitates collaborative work through effective use of available systems and technology.

Action 1.2.1

Assess NW Straits Commission operational and procedural systems and needs and make recommendations for improvement

Action 1.2.2

Create a plan to implement operational and procedural system recommendations and carry out the plan

Action 1.2.3

Create documentation and training on how NW Straits Commission operational and procedural systems should be used

Action 1.2.4

Create an MRC-accessible information hub that serves as a centralized resource for internal and external communication and coordination tools.

Strategic Objective 1.3

NW Straits Commission encourages representation from NW Straits communities and adapts to differences in participation and engagement.

Action 1.3.1

Complete the Community Connectivity Analysis to expand and/or enhance our reach and diversify outreach for Commissioner and committee recruitment.

Action 1.3.2

Work with MRCs to identify strategies for broad community engagement to support MRC recruitment and influence Commissioner representation.

Strategic Objective 1.4

The mission, operational structure, and responsibilities of NW Straits Commission are clear and understandable.

Action 1.4.1

Ensure distinct and clear identity of NW Straits Commission.

Action 1.4.2

Clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of NW Straits Commission.

Pillar 2: Funding

Strategic Goal 2

NW Straits Commission secures long-term, sustainable funding to support and enable the work of NW Straits Commission and MRCs.

Strategic Objective 2.1:

NW Straits Commission secures \$5 million in annual funding.

Action 2.1.1

NW Straits Commission staff will evaluate NW Straits Commission current funding sources and identify gaps or needs to support robust organizational operations, programs, and projects.

Action 2.1.2

NW Straits Commission will identify and assist in implementing strategies to broaden funding approaches in support of action 1.1.1

Pillar 3: Amplify Stewardship and Innovation

Strategic Goal 3

NW Straits Commission amplifies the visibility and positive impact of MRCs and NW Straits Commission to conserve and restore marine ecosystems.

Strategic Objective 3.1

NW Straits Commission strategically leverages the innovations, projects, and talents of MRCs to adapt our regional priorities, and increase conservation impact.

Action 3.1.1

NW Straits Commission builds off the marine program outline to develop a process to track and evaluate new/existing projects and emerging ideas for potential regional projects and programs.

Action 3.1.2

NW Straits Commission develops a framework for prioritization and decision making for reviewing and balancing the regional project portfolio of NW Straits Commission relative to staff capacity, available funding, and leveraged partnerships.

Strategic Objective 3.2

NW Straits Commission facilitates the cross-pollination of ideas across MRCs to enable the transfer of knowledge.

Action 3.2.1

NW Straits Commission hosts a symposium series featuring innovative MRC ideas and archives the resources for sharing across MRCs.

Action 3.2.2

NW Straits Commission evaluates effectiveness of Commission meeting highlights and explores strategies for sharing Commission information in a way that is effective for MRC Commission reps and MRC staff.

Action 3.2.3

Explore ways to effectively manage and share the MRC project directory with MRCs and NW Straits Commissioners.

Strategic Objective 3.3

NW Straits Commission elevates the work and outcomes of MRCs and NW Straits Commission to demonstrate collective impact.

Action 3.3.1

NW Straits Commission reviews, evaluates and updates the existing NW Straits Commission communications plan to guide communication strategy, including media strategy.

Action 3.3.2

NW Straits Commission provides communication and media training to help MRCs share stories with target audiences.

Action 3.3.3

NW Straits Commission explores new structure for Impact Report to better demonstrate collective impact of MRCs and NW Straits Commission.

Pillar 4: MRCs

Strategic Goal 4

NW Straits Commission supports MRC leadership in innovative approaches to advance their stewardship and advisory solutions.

Strategic Objective 4.1:

MRCs have necessary and sufficient scientific information, technical skills, and capacity in project planning and implementation.

Action 4.1.1

Science Advisory Committee and NWSC staff develops a process for selecting and sharing regional resources that summarize science-informed recovery and conservation opportunities that MRCs can use to support project identification and prioritization.

Action 4.1.3

NW Straits Commission staff solicit input from MRCs and MRC staff on their needs and interests in receiving support on MRC project design, prioritization, implementation, and evaluation.

Action 4.1.5

NW Straits Commission staff to facilitate one-on-one consultations between MRCs and SAC in project planning.

Strategic Objective 4.2:

NW Straits Commission, MRC staff, and MRC members communicate proactively with each other to support and enable the work of both groups.

Action 4.2.1

NW Straits Commission staff will provide a structured orientation to new MRC staff and maintain associated resources in an accessible platform. Orientation topics and resources could include guidance on balancing MRC staff capacity across MRC needs, how MRC staff interface with NW Straits Commission, and how MRC staff work with and support MRCs.

Action 4.2.2

NW Straits Commission staff will meet informally with MRC staff annually in their county to check in and assess opportunities for individualized support.

Action 4.2.3

NW Straits Commission staff attend in person MRC meetings and/or events (when capacity allows) to support relationship building between NW Straits Commission staff and individual members.

Action 4.2.4

NW Straits Commission staff provide briefings and hold discussions with county managers (including MRC staff supervisors) to inform on NW Straits Commission and the connection to MRCs to maintain critical relationships with the county and ensure mutual understanding of needs and expectations.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: May 2025

Submitted by: Amelia Kalagher

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- Olympia Oyster annual population surveys took place on May 15th and 16th.
- The MRC held its annual leadership election. LaTrisha Suggs will remain as Chair, and Alan Clark will serve as both Vice Chair and NWSC Representative.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff):

- Bob Vreeland resigned from the MRC, in his role representing Conservation & Environmental Interests. Bob's spot is not yet filled.
- Chris Rumble resigned from the MRC, in his role representing the Development Community. Chris' spot is not yet filled.
- The MRC held its annual leadership election at the May meeting. Ann Soule stepped down as Vice Chair, and Alan Clark became the new Vice Chair. LaTrisha Suggs remains MRC Chair, and Alan Clark remains the NWSC representative.
- Cathy Lear is retiring, with a last day in the office on June 2. Rebecca Mahan will resume as MRC Coordinator. Amelia Kalagher's position remains unchanged.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

- Olympia Oyster annual population surveys took place in collaboration with the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe on May 15th and 16th.
- The MRC held its regular monthly meeting on Monday, May 19th.
- Shore Friendly community beach walks will take place at Sequim Bay and Cline Spit on May 27th.
- The NWSC's monthly meeting will take place in Clallam County on May 30th.

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments): none to report.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

- *Olympia oysters*: MRC members, staff and staff from the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe conducted annual population surveys of Olympia oysters at the Sequim Bay restoration site on May 15th and 16th.
- *Forage fish*: Forage fish sampling continues. The MRC obtained a second set of sample processing gear to simplify logistics. Chelsea Korbolic has taken on a lead role in this project.
- *Elwha Beach*: Clallam MRC continued to steward the beach at the mouth of the Elwha River.
- *Pinto abalone*: Eight days of dive surveys west of Port Angeles have been tentatively scheduled for September 2025, with backup days for weather.
- *Kelp monitoring*: Two MRC members/alternates and three community volunteers attended the kayaking kickoff meeting in Port Hadlock on May 14th. Several volunteers will attend kayak

safety training in late May and early June, and scouting and survey days are planned for June and July. Alan Clark and Chelsea Korbolic are working as co-leads for this project.

- *Pigeon guillemots*: Project lead Ed Bowlby has been working with volunteers to plan summer 2025 monitoring.
- *Ediz Hook revegetation*: A planting event took place in March 2025, and no additional planting is expected. The site will be monitored periodically to check plant survival and any additional needs.
- *Education – outreach cards*: MRC members continued supplying local eateries and community establishments with educational outreach cards featuring information on local marine life.
- *Education – displays*: MRC members continued developing new displays for outreach at local festivals.
- *Education – oil spill response*: The HAZWOPER and oiled wildlife training was offered in April. The MRC does not expect to provide additional trainings this year.
- *Sound Toxins (community partner project, Feiro Marine Life Center)*: MRC alternate Nancy Stephanz continues to process samples weekly for the Sound Toxins project, with Feiro Marine Life Center.
- *Shellfish biotoxins (community partner project, Clallam County Environmental Health)*: Bob Vreeland has resigned from the MRC, and likely will not be sampling shellfish at Pillar Point this year. Clallam County Environmental Health is seeking additional volunteers.
- *New project development*: The following projects are being considered for the next biennium.
 - Nearshore Restoration at Co-Managed Wildlife Refuges
 - Elwha River Stewardship
 - Olympia Oyster Surveys
 - Pinto Abalone
 - Forage Fish Monitoring
 - HAZWOPER / Oiled Wildlife Response Training
 - Pigeon Guillemot Monitoring
 - Ediz Hook Debris Removal
 - Derelict Crab Pot Removal
 - Kelp Monitoring

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.): none to report.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):



Photo 1: Conducting Olympia Oyster surveys in Sequim Bay. May 15th, 2025. Photo credit Rebecca Mahan.



Photo 2: Conducting Olympia Oyster surveys in Sequim Bay. May 15th, 2025. Photo credit Rebecca Mahan.



Photo 3: Conducting Olympia Oyster surveys in Sequim Bay. May 15th, 2025. Photo credit Rebecca Mahan.



Photo 4: Growing spat seen during Olympia Oyster surveys in Sequim Bay. May 15th, 2025. Photo credit Rebecca Mahan.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: May 2025

Submitted by: Katie Kowal

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- An evening lecture event was held in connection with Puget Sound Restoration Fund at the Port Townsend Library on May 15, to discuss kelp life history and presence in WA state, and the new monitoring buoy stationed off North Beach in Port Townsend.
 - Digging for Dinner Workshop was held on May 18th, 33 participants attended.
-
- **Membership/Leadership changes** (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): MRC member Brad Bebout resigned on 5/7/2025. Currently recruiting for 2 Youth members.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

Past Events/Meetings

April 28 – NAZ team swapped winter buoys for summer buoys in Port Townsend Bay.
May 6 - MRC Monthly Meeting
May 9 – Education and Outreach Supply check meeting
May 13 – Project lead Neil met with a resident in Port Ludlow to discuss a potential Olympia oyster restoration site
May 14 – MRC Kelp Kayak Kickoff, Port Hadlock, WA
May 15 – MRC-PSRF Kelp Lecture - Understanding Underwater Forests
May 18 – Digging for Dinner Workshop
May 23 – Rain Garden Work Party – Lincoln and Adams
May 27 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting
May 27 – Olympia oyster shell spread event - Discovery Bay Powerlines site
May 29 - June 1 – ROV Derelict Crab Pot Removal– on the water with students

Upcoming Events/Meetings

June 3 - MRC Monthly Meeting
June 7 – Rain Garden Work Party – Garfield and Adams
June 7 – Kayak Safety Training (Port Townsend)
June 9-10 – Crab packet packing party
June 14 – Discovery Bay Eelgrass survey for Olympia oyster 2026 permitting
June 17 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting
June 21 – Shrimpfest tabling event
June 25 – Crabbing 101 Workshop

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments): Nothing to report.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

- Monitoring:
 - **Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index):** Sarah Fisker will sample Dabob Bay in late May.
 - **Forage fish – Quilcene Marina:** Sarah Fisker will sample Quilcene Marina in late May.
 - **Shoreline Landowner:** Nothing to report.
 - **Kelp kayak monitoring:** 3 Jefferson MRC members attended the Kelp Kayak Kickoff on May 14. An evening lecture event was held in connection with Puget Sound Restoration Fund at the Port Townsend Library on May 15, to discuss kelp life history and presence in WA state, and the new monitoring buoy stationed off North Beach in Port Townsend.
 - **Storm surge monitoring:** Nothing to report.
- Rain Gardens:
 - Rain Garden Work Party held May 23 in Port Townsend (Lincoln and Adams).
- Education & Outreach:
 - Digging for Dinner event held May 18th, 33 participants.
 - Planning for Crabbing 101 packet packing party and June workshop in progress.
- Olympia Oysters:
 - Oly team met on May 27th at the Powerlines site in south Discovery Bay to empty 1000 bags of Pacific oyster shell delivered in April 2025.
- Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:
 - Team swapped buoys in Port Townsend Bay on April 28.
- ROV Lost Crab Pots:
 - On the water work scheduled for May 29-June 1.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.): None.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info): All photos taken by Katie Kowal unless otherwise noted.



*Photo: Bryan DeCaterina, Gordon King, and Troy McKelvey (not pictured) swap winter for summer buoys in Port Townsend Bay.
– 4/28/25, Port Townsend Bay, WA
Photo Credit: Troy McKelvey*



*Photo: An evening lecture, "Understanding the underwater forest: Kelp research and monitoring at North Beach" was held at the Port Townsend Public Library. 50 attendees heard from Jeff Whitty (NWSC), Kari Inch (PSRF) and Sophie Schwager (PSRF) about kelp life history and presence in WA state, and the new monitoring buoy stationed off North Beach in Port Townsend.
– 5/15/25, Port Townsend, WA
Photo Credit: Katie Kowal*



*Photo: Emily Buckner (PSRF, Jefferson MRC) kicks off the “Understanding the underwater forest: Kelp research and monitoring at North Beach” lecture at the Port Townsend Public Library.
– 5/15/25, Port Townsend, WA
Photo Credit: Katie Kowal*



*Photo: Jeff Whitty (NWSC) presents at the “Understanding the underwater forest: Kelp research and monitoring at North Beach” lecture at the Port Townsend Public Library.– 5/15/25, Port Townsend, WA
Photo Credit: Katie Kowal*

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: San Juan County

Month/Year: May 2025

Submitted by: Sam Whitridge & Katie Johnson

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- The Spring Great Islands Cleanup was a great success with over 300 volunteers cleaning 171 miles of beaches and roadways across San Juan County resulting in 2,925 pounds of debris removed. A huge thank you to everyone who participated in this biannual event protecting marine waters from plastic pollution.
- Marine Project Manager Frances Robertson traveled to Washington, D.C. for Puget Sound Day on the Hill to advocate for San Juan County's marine priorities and the reauthorization of the Northwest Straits Initiative, joining partners to engage lawmakers on key Puget Sound restoration issues.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff):

In mid May the County Council gave approval to move forward with amending the MRC business rules and powers & duties to add up to 2 youth positions to the MRC. Several MRC members were in attendance as support and now a resolution will be drafted to formalize the changes to committee structure.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

- MRC Meeting – May 1
- UW Friday Harbor Labs Open House – May 3
- May Monthly Beach Cleanup with San Juan Island Visitors Bureau – May 4
- PFSS – San Juan Island Yacht Club – State Parks Cleanup – May 31, June 1, June 2
- PFSS Monthly Beach Cleanup hosted by SJI Pride Foundation – June 1

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support, or other funding commitments):

None to report.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

MRC members will be assisting with shore based vessel counts at known eelgrass sites. These opportunistic surveys will be ongoing to accompany our long range monitoring of vessel presence at specific sites. Data collected this spring will be uploaded to the Kobo Toolbox to help track vessel activity and inform protection efforts.

Over 300 volunteers came together for the 2025 Spring Great Islands Clean-Up, and the results were awesome! From local families to visiting kayak groups — even folks who traveled up from Seattle — our community united to clean 171 miles of beaches, roads, and trails across 9 islands in San Juan County including Jones, Lopez, Orcas, San Juan, Shaw, Stuart, Turn, Waldron, and Yellow. In total 2,925 pounds of debris was removed from local beaches and roadways. Together, we're protecting the health of our shorelines and the Salish Sea, proof that thinking globally and acting locally really works. The Great Islands Cleanup would not be possible without the collaborative effort led by Plastic Free Salish Sea and accompanying partners.

Plastic Free Salish Sea, the San Juan Island Yacht Club, and Washington State Parks are partnering for a multi-day cleanup effort (May 31–June 2). Volunteers will travel by boat to Stuart, Sucia, and Jones islands to clean State Park beaches. This collaboration is a great opportunity to strengthen ties with local boaters and promote stewardship of these remote and ecologically significant areas.

The MRC hosted a booth at the Friday Harbor Labs Open House on May 3. It was a great day of engaging with the public about the work of the MRC, highlighting the derelict vessel prevention program and passing out Whale Warning Flags to boaters. Each year this event has grown, and we have been fortunate to have wonderful interactions with the public, sharing about the interest areas of the MRC and spreading messages of sustainable marine resource use. This year over 730 people were in attendance and the MRC booth saw a lot of foot traffic and visitors.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.):

In late April, Marine Project Manager Frances Robertson attended Puget Sound Day on the Hill in Washington, D.C., to advocate for the reauthorization of the Northwest Straits Initiative and represent San Juan County's marine interests. While there, she joined regional partners in meeting with legislators to build support for salmon recovery funding, initiatives to reduce vessel noise impacts on Southern Resident killer whales, shellfish and green crab monitoring, Tribal treaty rights, and broader Puget Sound restoration efforts. Special thanks were extended to Representative Rick Larsen and Representative Emily Randall for sponsoring HB2860, and to Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell for introducing SB1433 to reauthorize the Northwest Straits Initiative.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photos and additional info):



Great Islands Cleanup Photos – San Juan. Photos by Katie Fleming



Shaw Island Nuns GICU – Photo by Jennifer Woodbridge.



Orcas Island GICU. Photo by The Exchange/Orcas Recycling Services



Orcas Island GICU. Photo by The Exchange/Orcas Recycling Services.



Lopez Island GICU – Photo by Sarah Reeves

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: May/2025

Submitted by: Tracy/Lynne

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- Bowman Bay Beach Seining- The story of the month is Chum! 933 just for April 2025! This breaks all the records for chum found to date at Bowman Bay. Checkout the NWSF Facebook post: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1AY64Yk4vq/>.
- La Conner School Rain Garden- May 18th- La Conner Elementary School 4th and 5th graders participated in a class on rain gardens with hands on learning activities taught by MRC Project Lead Elizabeth Drozda. The interpretive sign donated by Westar Solutions has been printed and is ready to install.
- Kids on the Beach- We just wrapped up the 2025 spring KOTB program which delivered an authentic hands-on marine science learning experience to over 200 students in Skagit County! We even found a European Green Crab molt this year, which served as an excellent learning opportunity. Recent article in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#)

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): Aundrea McBride was appointed as the newest member of the MRC representing the Skagit Watershed Council. Holi Watne will serve as Aundrea's Alternate. Aundrea previously served on the MRC from 2014-2016 as the Swinomish Alternate Rep.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

- **May 2- Kayak Kelp Kickoff**- at Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve from 10:00am-2:00pm.
- **May 6-8- Kids on the Beach Field Days at Padilla Bay**- from 11-2:30pm- with Sedro Woolley Middle School.
- **May 8- Monthly MRC Meeting** via Teams 9am-11am. Adopted Skagit MRC's proposed Land Acknowledgment statement. Approved the proposed Project Lead Description updates (this is a working document that will require periodic updates).
- **May 21- Kids on the Beach at Padilla Bay**- from 9:30am-1:30pm with Allen Elementary.
- **May 29** – Skagit Kayak Team BBQ and revisit kelp plans
- **May 31- Kayak Safety Training at Bowman Bay**- from 8am - noon and 1pm -5pm
- **June 4- Bowman Bay Stewardship Day**- 10am – 1pm, co-hosted by Skagit MRC, NWSF, and SFEG to include plant maintenance, forage fish education, forage fish sampling and beach seining.
- **June 14- Salish Sea Stewards Social Event**- Presentation by Wolf Hollow at 11am in the Stevens Center at Padilla Bay.
- **June 18- Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee in-person meeting**- 1pm at Padilla Bay

Funding updates (newly - awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments): No updates.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
 - The 2025 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program, which commenced on February 18, 2025 & ran for 10 weeks, was completed on April 29, 2025.
 - Twenty-four (24) new Stewards for 2025 had a festive graduation at PBNERR. The SSS Advisory Committee gave a hearty welcome to the new volunteers joining the larger group of 365 SSS Alumni.

- This trainee class has been an exceptionally talented one and we look forward to their future involvement in over 60 different environmental organizations.
 - *Of note:* Victor Garcia, a member of the graduating 2025 SSS Class, has been appointed by Governor Fergusons to fill a Western Washington seat on the WA State Fish & Wildlife Commission.
- The Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee finalized their membership recruitment procedures, and a New AC Member Packet is in the works. The AC attempts to add two members from each graduating class to the Advisory Committee with fresh eyes on the Program.
- Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee meeting held May 15th via Teams. In June we will have an in-person meeting to review Training Schedule Topics & Speakers for the 2026 Stewards Program.
- SSS Social Event planned for June 18th at Padilla Bay with a presentation from Wolf Hollow.
- Darla is stepping down as the MRC Project Lead at the end of June 2025. Dale Fournier, a newly appointed MRC member, will become the new SSS Project Lead starting July 1, 2025.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Skagit MRC contracted with the Salish Sea School's Catherine Houck to coordinate the forage fish surveys in Skagit. Pete invited Catherine to the July MRC meeting to introduce herself and give a report.
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue. Spawning activity is starting to pick up.
 - Surveys take around 1.5 -2 hours to complete.
 - Started using the i-Form automated system to collect data and photos on smart phones and send to WDFW. There are a few glitches with the automated systems and a few survey sites where volunteers are unable to get phone coverage to use the system so they are still using the paper form.
 - May 2025 forage fish survey schedule:
 - May 7- Bowman Bay at noon
 - May 12- Guemes Channel at 9am
 - May 12- Similk Bay at 9am
 - June 2025 forage fish survey schedule:
 - June 4- Bowman Bay at noon
 - June 11- Guemes Channel at 9am
 - June 11- Similk Bay at 9am
- Kids on the Beach- Chandler Colohan:
 - 90 Concrete High School students participated in April.
 - **May 6-8:** Padilla Bay Field Days with 86 students from Sedro Woolley Evergreen Middle School - 3 classes of 6th graders. Collected biodiversity data along transects on the mudflat.
 - **May 21:** Padilla Bay Field Day with 42 students from Allen Elementary 4th & 5th grades (English is a second language for majority of students- engaged interpreters). Recent article in the Skagit Valley Herald.
 - Over 200 students participated in the spring 2025 KOTB program from three schools- 10 classes.
 - Volunteers assisted with field days, including some of the new SSS volunteers from the 2025 class. This year was a little more difficult getting help from volunteers compared to previous years. More PBNERR staff had to help this year.
 - 1 school, 3 classes scheduled for the fall 2025 KOTB program.
- La Conner School Rain Gardens – Elizabeth Drozda:

- The rain garden sign design has been finalized and will hopefully be printed soon.
- Elizabeth taught a lesson on rain gardens with hands-on activities on May 13 at the La Conner Elementary School.
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - 2025 Fidalgo Bay Day has been set for Saturday, September 13, 2025, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort!
 - Save the Date cards and links to the online registration form has been shared with past participating organizations and volunteers.
 - 20 organizations have registered to participate. We have space for 35.
 - 6 volunteers have signed up so far.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - MRC Project Lead Paul Dinnel went out in the field with the PSRF abalone crew this month and visited three different sites (one in Skagit).
 - Collected one female spawner from Lopez Island that they took back to the lab for broodstock for abalone outplants. Several aggregates of abalone were also observed- in close proximity to one another, per protocol they left those abalone alone and only collect singleton abalone.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Paul collected native oyster recruitment bags that were set out last year in Fidalgo Bay to monitor the annual 2024 recruitment status. The number of oyster larvae tallied indicated a very good spawn last year. The bags collected around the trestle had around 50% more recruitment than what we’ve seen in the past. The other sites around the Bay didn’t follow that trend, but they still had very strong recruitment.
 - Paul put new oyster recruitment bags out for monitoring this year’s spawning and recruitment.
 - Paul set out shell strings (shells on a stick) at two different locations at Weaverling Spit and at the trestle in Fidalgo Bay, for the Puget Sound Restoration Fund to monitor oyster recruitment throughout Puget Sound.
 - PBNERR crew will be collecting native oyster recruitment bags from Crandall Spit that they put out last year and transferred over to Padilla Bay for oyster restoration. Swinomish Tribal Community also has oyster recruitment bags there that they collect for oyster restoration in Skagit Bay.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

Skagit surveys generally take place from June-September each year and include the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Lynne Wenberg - Lead) and new “Lone Tree Point” (Steven Olsen – Lead).

 - 2025 season is swinging into gear. The three Kayak Team leads have published their survey schedules for the 4 Skagit Survey Sites for June – September and the schedule has been posted for volunteer sign-ups.
 - A notice will be placed in the next WAVE Newsletter soliciting new kayaker volunteers. Caitlyn, NWSC fame and an experienced kayaker, has agreed to join the Skagit kelp surveys as her schedule allows – yay!

Upcoming events:

 - May 2 – NWSC Kelp Kickoff workshop at Padilla Bay
 - May 30 – Skagit Kayak Team BBQ and revisit kelp plans
 - June 6 – Skagit Kayak Team Shakedown Cruise
 - June survey dates: June 8 (Biz Point), June 9 (Coffin Rocks), June 10 (Lone Tree), June 17 (Shannon Point)
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Bowman Bay Beach Seining Updates:**

- Beach seining is now occurring twice a month at Bowman Bay - funding is in place for NWSF to continue January – December 2025.
- Beach seining statistics for **April 7**: 913 fish total: staghorn sculpin (15), English sole (32), starry flounder (4), juvenile sculpin (31) and Chum salmon (831). 8 volunteers contributed 14.5 volunteer hours.
- Beach seining statistics for **April 21**: 122 fish total: starry flounder (1), staghorn sculpin (8), shiner perch (1), three spine stickleback (2), Chum salmon (102). English sole (5), juvenile flatfish (1), and juvenile sculpin (2). 6 volunteers contributed 15.5 volunteer hours.
- The story of the month is Chum! 933 just for April 2025! This breaks all the records for chum found to date at Bowman Bay. Checkout the NWSF Facebook post: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1AY64Yk4vq/>.
- **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:**
 - June 4 is currently in the works for the kickoff of plant maintenance activities with volunteers. NWSF, SFEG, and MRC are working to have beach seining and forage fish teams there as well. More details to come.
- **Bowman Bay Pocket Beach Restoration Feasibility Study- SFEG project:**
 - Yuki Reiss (SFEG) reported that native amphibians were recently discovered at the Bowman Bay wetland site where they were studying the feasibility of opening it up into a pocket beach. This new finding could indicate this project might not be feasible.
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment- Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
The contract with Confluence Environmental has been through December 31, 2025, for an additional follow-on statement of work (\$10K) to:
 - Make improvements for simplified user functionality to the Nearshore Assessment and Prioritization tool while protecting sensitive landowner data.
 - Improve MRC useability and access to parcel-level data within the tool.
 - Build out details of high potential restoration projects proposed for the MRC.
 - Conduct training and tutorials for improved user experience in using the tool.
 - Provide editorial edits to text, photos and links to the two previously completed Story Maps as directed by MRC.
- The Olympia Oyster Story Map was updated by Confluence and is now LIVE on the Skagit MRC website as of April 3, 2025 [click here](#)
- The NEAP Tool is in the process of being updated for improved public access and simplified user interface – ECD June 2025.
- The NEAP Tool Story Map is in process of finalization and a “how-to video” will be made as a tutorial for NEAP functionality.
- The NEAP Tool, Story Map, How-to Video as well as back up materials will be posted onto SoundIQ – ECD June 2025.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.): NA

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):

Kids on the Beach at Padilla Bay - May 2025

Photo- Annie England



La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden Class with Skagit MRC Project Lead Elizabeth Drozda- May 18, 2025
Photo- Cammy Alumbres



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: May 2025

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- The derelict vessel subcommittee and the marine vegetation subcommittee have been busy writing project proposals for the 25-27 grant funds.
- Drafts of the MRC and Tulalip Tribes signs at Kayak Point Park about the ecological, historical, and culture importance of Port Susan were reviewed at the May MRC meeting.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff):

The Marine Ecology Intern is set to start June 16.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

Elisa Dawson assisted with the kelp kickoff event on May 2

Elisa Dawson presented the 2024 MRC work to the Technical Committee of the Snohomish Basin Salmonid Recovery group on May 6

The MRC meeting was on May 21

Funding updates (newly awarded grants, in-kind support, or other funding commitments)

None

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

Strategic Planning / MRC Admin: The MRC is working on letter of recommendations to Council to be delivered via letter.

Forage Fish Monitoring (MRC Grant 2024-2025): Picnic Point and Meadowdale were sampled on May 15. Howarth Park occurred on May 10.

Marine Vegetation Monitoring (MRC Grant 2024-2025): Monitoring and backup dates are scheduled as follows:

July:

Mukilteo – 7/7
Edmonds – 7/8
Meadowdale – 7/9
Hat Island – 7/10
Backup dates – 7/21, 7/22, 7/23, 7/24

August:
Edmonds – 8/7
Hat Island – 8/6
Backup dates – 8/8, 8/20

September:
Hat Island – 9/4
Backup date – 9/18

Marine Vegetation Outreach (MRC OTGP grant project for 2024 – 2025): The subcommittee is continuing event planning for the September outreach event and working on an initial draft of the decision maker outreach plan.

The subcommittee is currently working on finalizing the proposal for 25-27 OTGP funds to include another year of outreach and a year of marine vegetation monitoring with DNR.

MRC members hosted a table educating about marine vegetation at the Edmonds Watershed Festival on May 3.

Below projects are other projects of the MRC funded by SWM fees:

Nearshore Restoration: The Year 2 report for Meadowdale Beach Park Restoration is available on the MRC webpage: <https://snocomrc.org/projects/meadowdale-beach-monitoring/>

Outreach: Beach cleanups in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers continue to be held quarterly. The quarter two cleanup is planned for June 11.

Crabber Outreach/Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention: The subcommittee is in early draft stages of writing an article for boaters on oil spill preparedness and prevention. They plan to have the article reviewed by MRC. The crabber subcommittee is taking steps to conduct crabber outreach at the Everett 10th street boat launch this year.

Marine Water Quality: The MRC Water Quality Subcommittee met on May 19th to discuss the ORCA work. The Water Quality Plans to work with the Marine Ecology Intern and ORCA this summer to continue to move this work forward.

Derelict Vessels: Two vessels have been identified for removal for 2025. MRC staff is currently waiting for DNR's budget to be approved before we move forward on removal.

The subcommittee is finalizing the proposal for 25-27 grant funds to include a framework of derelict vessels and a final report that can be used to inform future removal.

Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area: Signage for Kayak Point is being designed in-house at Tulalip Tribes utilizing the information provided by the MRC. The MRC reviewed and provided feedback on draft signs at the May MRC meeting.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.):

Upcoming Events:

- Forage fish monitoring Picnic Point and Meadowdale – June 25
- Forage fish monitoring Howarth Park – June 21
- Next MRC Meeting: June 18, at Snohomish County campus

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: May 2025

Submitted by: Dana Flerchinger and Austin Rose

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- The MRC will present their 2024 Annual Report to the Whatcom County Council Climate Action Natural Resources Committee on May 27.
- The MRC hosted 4 schools across 3 Beach Seine with Kids field events. The April 22nd event had the largest catch yet with 938 chum, 1 chinook, 1 coho, and 1 shiner perch! This year, the MRC also partnered with the Salish Sea School to run additional stations at the field events for a more interactive learning experience for the students.
- On May 29th, the MRC will be working with students from Bellingham Technical College to conduct the North Chuckanut Bay Olympia oyster population survey. This will be the last population survey in North Chuckanut Bay as this site has not yielded promising results for Olympia oyster restoration over the past 6 years.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff):

Andrew Shelton resigned as MRC Chair. A new Chair will be elected at the June MRC meeting.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

- The May MRC meeting was held on May 1st. Highlights included:
 - The MRC will present their 2024 Annual Report to the Whatcom County Council Climate Action Natural Resources Committee on May 27.
 - The MRC will table at three outreach events coming up: *Northwest Straits Foundation Spring Celebration*: May 17, 12:00pm – 3:00pm at Larrabee State Park, *Day at the Beach Celebration*: June 7th, 9-12pm at Birch Bay State Park, and *What's the Point Intertidal Exploration*: June 14, 12:00pm – 3:00pm at Point Whitehorn Park.
 - The MRC amended their grant to remove the "Remote Beach Cleanup" project and transferred funds to support site assessments, spat, and permits for Olympia oyster restoration sites in Drayton.
 - Current MRC vacancies include a Recreation Interest, Nooksack Tribe Representative, and Lummi Nation Representative.
 - The committee had a focused discussion on three projects for inclusion in the 2025-27 grant proposal that needed more details fleshed out.
 - North Chuckanut Bay PIC: The MRC Executive Committee recommended the MRC develop a technical report summarizing the MRC's work over the past 11 years. This report would outline next steps that could be considered to open the recreational shellfish area (i.e shoreline survey, trestle modification). The MRC could engage with university students for GIS analysis.
 - Olympia oyster restoration – Drayton Harbor: The MRC contracted with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) to conduct a site assessment of potential areas to set up bioassays of Olympia oyster cultch. The site assessment was completed on March

31. A habitat characterization survey was also considered, though PSRF recommended the MRC move forward with permitting, as enough information was obtained through the first survey. The MRC will make payments to the cultch order using funds in their current grant and will include more funding with the 2025-27 grant. MRC staff are also looking into additional funding opportunities.

- Wildcat Cove Eelgrass Preservation: The MRC previously discussed that they wanted to continue to engage with boat ramp users, though did not identify specific steps that could be taken to continue the efforts. Amber Forest, WA State Parks, indicated that Parks will continue to set out cones through this summer to limit the boat traffic to a single lane, but they are also interested in partnering with the MRC in the future to continue education and outreach efforts. Members volunteered to meet with Amber to discuss the potential of having interns engage with park visitors this summer. Interns could also be funded through outside sources.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

- Beach Seine with Kids
The MRC hosted 4 schools across 3 Beach Seine with Kids field events. Harmony Elementary School attended the April 22nd field event, Carl Cozier Elementary School attended the May 6th event, and Alderwood Elementary and Acme Elementary Schools attended the final event on May 20th. Across the 4 schools, seven, 4th grade classrooms participated for a total of 166 students. At each event, the students also got to hear from a tribal elder from either the Nooksack Tribe (Jim and Sandra Bura) or Lummi Nation (Althea Wilson and Frank Lawrence III). The Lummi Natural Resources field biologists successfully seined at 3 species of salmonids per event including chum, coho, and chinook. The April 22nd event had the largest catch yet with 938 chum, 1 chinook, 1 coho, and 1 shiner perch! This year, the MRC also partnered with the Salish Sea School to run additional stations at the field events for a more interactive learning experience for the students.
- Intertidal Monitoring
This summer, the MRC is piloting intertidal monitoring at 2 sites within the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve. Barnacle Rock will be surveyed on June 12th and Neptune Beach will be surveyed on July 24th. This work was previously conducted by RE Sources, who no longer has the funding to continue the program. Staff and MRC members conducted a mock survey on May 16th to get trained up on survey protocols before the first official survey. An MRC subcommittee and staff have also been meeting to discuss the value of the data and how the monitoring plan could be adjusted to better reflect the interests of the MRC.
- HABs
The HABs team has continued sampling weekly at Semiahmoo Marina and Birch Bay Village Marina. Samples were/will be collected on May 6th, 13th, 20th, and 27th.
- Chuckanut PIC
In addition to regular monthly sampling, the MRC has continued to conduct microbial source tracking (MST) in North Chuckanut Bay at priority sites that have demonstrated consistently high fecal coliform levels over the past years. The goal of this additional sampling is to better determine the sources of contamination to inform the next steps for the project. Results will be available in September of 2025. Since fecal coliform levels tend to be increased in the dry months (May-September) in North Chuckanut

Bay, 2 MST samples will be collected per month in addition to the monthly routine sampling to better understand potential sources of pollution in the bay. The MRC conducted the routine monthly sampling on May 15th and MST sampling on May 2nd and 12th.

- Forage Fish Surveys

The MRC conducted a forage fish survey at Clayton Beach on May 13th and at Little Squalicum Beach on May 14th.

- Bull Kelp Monitoring

The MRC has scheduled survey dates for the 2025 bull kelp monitoring season. Staff have started reaching out to volunteers and will be attending a kayak safety training in late May or early June.

- Olympia Oyster Restoration

On May 27th, Juileta Martineli with WDFW, MRC Staff, and NWSC staff, Allie Simpson, will head to areas in Drayton Harbor that were identified by the Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) as suitable tidal habitat for Olympia oyster restoration to identify specific plots that would be the most suitable to set up bioassays for further testing. On May 29th, the MRC will be working with students from Bellingham Technical College to conduct the North Chuckanut Bay Olympia oyster population survey. This will be the last population survey in North Chuckanut Bay as this site has not yielded promising results for Olympia oyster restoration over the past 6 years.

Other:

- Whatcom County Vessel Turn-In Event:

The next planning meeting is scheduled for June 4. A flyer has been developed and is being shared widely.

Photos



Students observe and learn how to identify juvenile salmon at this years' beach seine with kids events. Photo credits: Left: Kimberly Cauvel, NW Indian Fisheries Commission Public Information Officer. Right: Dana Flerchinger, MRC Staff.