



Minutes

May 30, 2025, 10:30 AM-3:00 PM

In-Person meeting, Dungeness River Nature Center, Sequim WA
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Alan Clark (Clallam – Chair), Jamie Stephens (Vice Chair), Larry Epstein (Puget Sound Partnership), Lynne Wenberg (Skagit), Emily Grason, Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Christina Koons (San Juan), Rick Beauregard (Whatcom), Ken Collins (Island)

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

Others in Attendance: Ed Bowlby, Lyn Muench, Chris Burns, LaTrisha Suggs (Clallam MRC Chair), Hansi Hals (Jamestown S’Klallam), Brenda Johnson, Cathy Lear, Sarah Fisker (Jefferson – Alternate), Mike Doherty, Randy Johnson (Clallam County Commissioner District 2), Rebecca Mahan, Nancy Stephanz, Jake Beattie

Absent: Elsa Schwartz, Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission), Ginny Broadhurst

Welcome and Introductions:

Alan welcomed attendees with introductions and the Tribal acknowledgement.

The April meeting minutes were approved as written by consensus.

Welcome to the Dungeness and Tribal Comments

Hansi Hals, Natural Resource Director with Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe shared remarks about projects and initiatives that Jamestown S’Klallam is working on and spearheading. Currently, the list of marine projects and programs that Jamestown is working on includes restoration at the mouth of the Dungeness River, invasive species control, stewardship planning, marine water quality, sea level rise, biotoxin monitoring, algal blooms, Olympia oyster population assessments, and European Green Crab trapping efforts at several sites. For more information about natural resource projects with Jamestown S’Klallam, visit their [website](#).

Remarks from Clallam County Commissioner

Commissioner Randy Johnson, District 2, shared some remarks about Clallam County, environmental and humanitarian issues the county is facing, and recent projects and developments. The county must weigh many important priorities when considering budgets.

Blue Schools Initiative Presentation

Jake Beattie, CEO of the NW Maritime Center presented on their Blue Schools Initiative. The Blue Schools Initiative aims to educate and connect students with maritime careers. For more information about the Blue Schools Initiative, visit the NW Maritime Center [website](#).



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Identify, Investigate, Integrate, Inform: MRCs as Advisory Bodies

LaTrisha Suggs, Clallam MRC Chair, presented about Clallam MRCs role as an advisory body to county government. The presentation included processes the MRC created to determine when to advise their county commissioners on local issues. For more information, please see the Clallam MRC [website](#) or e-mail LaTrisha Suggs (lsuggs@jamestowntribe.org).

MRC Reports

Clallam MRC – Alan Clark

- 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.

Jefferson MRC – Jeff Taylor

- 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.

Island MRC – Ken Collins

- The recent community Sea Level Rise (SLR) meeting with homeowners reflected the high degree of emotion and frustration on the topic.
- The open MRC coordinator position has closed for application. We eagerly await candidate review and hiring. In the meantime, our work is constrained and we are being selective in what we take on short term.

San Juan MRC – Christina Koons

- 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.

Skagit MRC – Lynne Wenberg

- 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](#).
- 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



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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](#).

Snohomish MRC – Tim Ellis

- 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.

Whatcom MRC – Rick Beauregard

- 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.

Draft Strategic Plan Review

Lucas shared the draft of the 2025-2030 Northwest Straits Commission Strategic Plan and introduced an exercise for attendees to provide feedback. Commissioners and staff were given time to consider if major components were missing and if grammatical corrections were needed.

Attendees shared their comments and suggestions for revising and improving the draft strategic plan. No substantial changes were recommended. Some minor additions and edits were suggested. Staff will take the feedback and incorporate it into a new revised draft. The draft plan will be considered for approval at the June Commission meeting.

Committee Updates:

Science Advisory Committee: Emily shared that the Committee met in April to discuss their schedule for the rest of the calendar year. The Committee will postpone holding training series



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until 2026. In 2025, the Committee will focus on feedback for MRC project proposals and consultations, as well as planning for the 2025 annual conference.

Executive Committee: At the May meeting, the Committee discussed the NW Straits Commission strategic plan and federal funding. The NW Straits Commission is working with the Department of Ecology on contingency plans in case federal funding is impacted. A preliminary FY26 supplemental budget request was submitted to the agency. The \$910,000 MRC funding proviso (\$455,000/year) was included in the state legislative budget for the 2025-2027 biennium.

External Relations Committee: Lucas shared about external relations topics. The reauthorization bill passed out of the Senate Commerce Committee and was heard in a subcommittee of the House Natural Resources Committee. Rep. Larsen and Rep. Randall spoke about the bill during the hearing. Staff submitted a grant proposal to the Department of Fish and Wildlife for European Green crab funding. Lucas, Dana, Lynne and Tracy will be meeting with Swinomish Tribal Chairman Steve Edwards in June to discuss partnership opportunities.

Business Items

NW Straits Commission staff gave updates on the following business items:

Website Update: Commission staff is collaborating with WaTech to transition the nwstraits.org website to a new platform. We are currently in the contracting phase, with the hopeful goal of beginning work this summer. Stay tuned.

Conference Save the Date November 7-8: Save the date for November 7-8 at Maple Hall in La Conner, Skagit County. Registration will open in August. The conference planning committee is making progress on conference sessions with guidance from the pre-conference survey that was filled out in March. Stay tuned for updates about speakers and the agenda on the [Conference website](#).

MRC Grant Proposals: All MRC grant proposals were submitted on May 29. Proposals will be submitted for review by staff and reviewed by the Science Advisory Committee. MRCs can expect feedback mid-late July.

Kelp Forest Alliance Letter of Support: The NW Straits Commission approved by consensus its support for the Kelp Forest Alliance Initiative that will help to connect the global kelp community and develop regional kelp-focused action plans and assessments for interested regions where they currently do not exist. Chair Clark will send an email to the Alliance voicing the Commission's support. For more information, visit the [website](#).

Project Updates

WA Kelp Project Inventory: Jeff provided an update on the WA Kelp Project Inventory, a collaborative tool to report and view information on kelp "projects" (projects, programs, initiatives,



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etc.) in Washington State. The inventory is a tool to see who is doing what with kelp in Washington. This tool was developed in collaboration with a list of partners including Puget Sound Partnership, WA Department of Natural Resources, the Kelp Node, and the Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Committee. The inventory is set to be launched in early June.

Derelict Vessel Turn In: Port of Skagit was awarded the 2025 Environmental Stewardship from the Washington Public Ports Association for their work on the derelict vessel turn in event. The NW Straits Commission was a partner on this event.

Anchor out of Eelgrass: Dana shared that the Anchor Out of Eelgrass social media campaign is live. Please visit the website at AnchorOut.org and follow the campaign on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Threads](#)!

Commissioner Updates

Puget Sound Partnership: Larry Epstein shared updates about the state and federal budgets. The state budget was enacted and EPA funding for Puget Sound is currently being reviewed at the federal level.

Public Comment and Partner Updates

There were no public comments or partner updates.