



Minutes

June 27, 2025, 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Pete Haase (Skagit – Alternate), Alan Clark (Clallam – Chair), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Jamie Stephens (Vice Chair), Kirk Larsen (Island – Alternate), Elsa Schwartz, Jason Lim (Puget Sound Partnership – Alternate), Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission), Rick Beauregard (Whatcom), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Christina Koons (San Juan)

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

Others in Attendance: Mike MacKay (Whatcom – Alternate), Austin Rose, Melissa Ciesielski, Fiona Beaty

Absent: Ginny Broadhurst

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

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

Alan introduced Jason Lim, Puget Sound Partnership alternate, and Daniel Duncan, NW Straits Veterans Conservation Corps intern.

Committee Updates

Science Advisory Committee: The Committee has been busy holding project consultations with MRCs. The Committee expressed that these meetings assisted in their understanding of MRC operations and procedures. The Committee reviewed and provided feedback on 13 project proposals and met in person in June to discuss the feedback.

External Relations Committee: U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen will be visiting Island MRC July 1 and Jamie and Lucas briefed U.S. Rep. Emily Randall's staff on the NWS Commission's work. Alan is looking at opportunities to for a site visit with WA State Rep. Adam Bernbaum. NWS Commission's NOAA and EPA funding are delayed. Timelines for this funding are not currently known.

Executive Committee: The Committee met in June and discussed ways to add value to in-person Commission meetings, such as adding more project site visits. Staff will evaluate feasibility as meetings are planned. Additionally, the Committee discussed the strategic plan and sharing the information within the plan with partners, so they're informed on our work. Budget was also



Minutes

discussed. Due to delayed NOAA and EPA funding, NW Straits Commission staff have been talking with MRCs about contingency planning for their project proposals.

Business Items

Staff gave updates on the following business items:

July NWS Commission Meeting in Whatcom County: Caitlyn Blair shared that the July NWS Commission meeting will be in Bellingham at the Whatcom County Civic Building on July 25, 2025 from 10 – 3 PM. Stay tuned for the agenda and materials and reach out to info@nwstraits.org if you have any questions.

Strategic Plan Approval: The NW Straits Commission approved the 2025-2030 strategic plan by consensus. Pete Haase, Skagit MRC alternate abstained. The plan was developed over a six-month process and is intended to be an internal tool to guide NWS Commission staff in prioritizing actions that advance the Commission's mission to: "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."

Project Updates

Whatcom Vessel Turn-in Event: Dana shared that applications are being accepted for the Whatcom Vessel Turn-in Recycling Event until July 15. For more information, please see [the flyer](#). Currently, there are 10 boats that have applied and been approved. Media Day for the event will be on August 6.

Dana Oster was recently interviewed about the Whatcom Vessel Turn-In Event. Listen to [Love Your Waterfront Episode 37](#), June 12, 2025.

MRC Reports

Clallam MRC – Alan Clark

- The MRC submitted its grant proposal for the next biennium, containing eight projects.
- The kelp monitoring team kicked off their monitoring season with a "shake-out" practice paddle at Freshwater Bay on June 17.
- Following Cathy Lear's retirement, Rebecca Mahan has resumed her position as MRC Coordinator.
- The MRC hosted Amy Olsen, Seattle Aquarium Research Scientist, for a presentation on local sea otter foraging during the June monthly meeting.

Island MRC – Kirk Larsen

- Coordination for Abandoned and Derelict Vessel (ADV) removal is planned for late June near Possession Point Kelp Bed.



Minutes

- Recruiting for Kelp Bed surveyors was so successful there is a waiting list!
- Guest Speaker Carlos Anderson from Whidbey Audubon was at the June MRC meeting.

Jefferson MRC – Jeff Taylor

- ROV Derelict Crab Pot Removal project removed 37 pots from Port Townsend Bay and Kilisut Harbor over 4 days and provided an educational/training opportunity for 15+ students and community members.
- Crabbing 101 (Catch more Crab) Workshop was held on June 25.

San Juan MRC – Karin Roemers-Klevin

- Karin Roemers-Klevin will be renewed for an additional term on the MRC and Joey Ullman will be replacing Craig Smith on the Committee. We are excited to have Karin back, and to welcome Joey, but we will sorely miss Craig's insight and wisdom on marine issues.
- Plastic Free Salish Sea set sail with the San Juan Island Yacht Club to steward beaches at Stuart, Sucia, and Jones Island State Marine Parks. During the two-day event over 20 volunteers cleared nearly 20 pounds of debris and litter from the shores, improving the marine environment for all.
- MRC members and staff participated in the Island Oil Spill Association (IOSA) response drill to practice protocol and safety measures to be prepared in the case of an incident. Being ready and knowing how to respond will enable better protection of marine waters and resources.

Skagit MRC – Pete Haase

- **Salish Sea Stewards Luncheon Social-** event held on June 14 at Padilla featured speaker Hadley Beahan from the Wolf Hollow Wildlife Rehabilitation Center on San Juan Island and included volunteer opportunities for Skagit County residents. An enthusiastic group of Salish Sea Stewards alumni from several years attended.
- **Bowman Bay Stewardship Day-** on June 4th more than a dozen Bowman Bay volunteers assisted with weeding the plantings at the restored beach. The native plant growth was so healthy it was tough to find weeds! The Northwest Straits Foundation and Skagit MRC event organizers were impressed by the enthusiasm and willingness of the volunteers to hunt for weeds in the dense native plant growth.

Snohomish MRC – Tim Ellis

- Welcome to our Marine Ecology Intern, Caliana Weber, who will be working on several MRC projects including a focus on shoreline assessment and a Possession Sound marine report card.
- The MRC is gearing up for kelp monitoring and has chosen dates. MRC members are planning for crabber outreach at the Port of Everett during opening week of crabbing season.

Whatcom MRC – Rick Beauregard



Minutes

- On May 29, the MRC conducted their final Olympia oyster population survey in North Chuckanut Bay with the assistance of students from the Bellingham Technical College Fisheries and Aquaculture Program. At two of the seven surveyed sites, a few live adult Olympia oysters were observed, but no larval recruitment was seen. This was 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.
- On June 24, staff with WDFW, the MRC, and the NWSC will head to areas of Drayton Harbor that were identified by the Puget Sound Restoration Fund as suitable habitat for Olympia oyster restoration. The goal of this survey will be to identify specific plots that would be the most suitable to set up bioassays for further testing.
- The Whatcom MRC needs a Chair, and has two vacancies, both for recreation interest positions.

Speed Date with a Scientist. Centering Community Values in Marine Planning

Fiona Beaty presented on her research while at University of British Columbia. She works in service of community and Indigenous-led marine stewardship throughout the coastline of British Columbia. Fiona's presentation titled: *Centering Community Values in Marine Planning* highlighted how social sciences can provide opportunities to elevate and integrate community values in marine planning processes. More details and information on this research are available in the [Emerging Issues Publication: Centering Community Values in Marine Planning](#).

Commissioner Updates

NW Indian Fisheries Commission: NW Indian Fisheries Commission has been engaging with the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) on nationwide permit programs, which deal with overwater structures that might inundate the waterscape that affects marine areas, or Tribal access to marine areas. The public comment period for the U.S. ACOE proposal to reissue and modify nationwide permits is currently open and will close on July 18, 2025. The proposal was published in the [Federal Register](#) on June 18, 2025.

Puget Sound Partnership: Jason Lim reported that an initial draft of the updated Action Agenda is planned for review later this summer, and that workshops for the [Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan Addendum](#) are underway. The Governor's budget forecast is \$700+ million lower than originally forecasted. A timeline for appointing the Puget Sound Partnership Director has not been released.



Minutes

Public Comment and Partner Updates

There was no public comment.