



Minutes

July 25, 2025, 10:10 AM- 3:00 PM
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Ken Collins (Island), Elsa Schwartz, Emily Grason, Rick Beauregard (Whatcom), Jamie Stephens (Vice Chair), Alan Clark (Clallam – Chair), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Pete Haase (Skagit – Alternate), Ginny Broadhurst, Karin Roemers-Klevin (San Juan – Alternate), Larry Epstein (Puget Sound Partnership)

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

Others in Attendance: Glen “Alex” Alexander, Eric Lewis (Blaine City Council, Ward 1), Steve Seymour, Kaylee Galloway, Dana Flerchinger, Gary Stoyka, Mike MacKay (Whatcom – Alternate)

Absent: Christina Koons (San Juan), Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission)

Welcome and Wildcat Cove Site Visit

Commissioners arrived at Wildcat Cove for the Whatcom MRC site visit. Alan opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement.

Remarks from Whatcom County Council Member Kaylee Galloway

Whatcom County Council member Kaylee Galloway shared remarks about current efforts in the County that relate to the work of the Commission, and on the collaborative role of the MRC within county government. She shared that the County is working on several adaptation strategies and mitigation in response to climate change, after completing a climate vulnerability assessment to identify assets to protect, the hazards that may put those assets at risk, and an assessment of the overlap of assets and hazards. Whatcom County is also working on their [2025 Comprehensive Plan Update](#), and coordinating closely with Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe on coordination of culvert removal to improve salmon migration routes.

Whatcom MRC: Working Together for Eelgrass Protection

Whatcom MRC member, Glen “Alex” Alexander presented on the MRC’s eelgrass protection and preservation work at Wildcat Cove near Larrabee State Park. The MRC partnered with WA Department of Natural Resources and Western Washington University to conduct eelgrass surveys at the site and developed and are now implementing a social marketing campaign to prevent boaters from driving on or dragging their boat on the eelgrass. The NW Straits Foundation hired interns to support the effort by informing boaters about how to avoid impacting the eelgrass habitat when using the boat launch. For more information about Whatcom MRC’s eelgrass protection project, visit their [website](#).



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Commissioner Introductions

Commissioners reconvened at the Whatcom Public Works building. Alan Clark opened the second half of the meeting with introductions.

Remarks from Ginny Broadhurst

Ginny Broadhurst shared remarks regarding her time serving on the NW Straits Commission and noted that she is resigning her position as a Gubernatorial appointee.

Committee Updates

Executive Committee: The Committee reviewed the NW Straits Commission July meeting agenda and draft strategic plan poster. The Committee also discussed funding redistribution opportunities to support MRCs while expected federal funds are pending. The topic will be revisited if need be in the future.

External Relations Committee: Elsa Schwartz shared on July 15, 2025, the House Natural Resources Committee advanced H.R. 2860, a bill to reauthorize the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative through 2031 and provide federal funding to support locally led marine resource conservation. A Senate version, S. 1433, passed out of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee earlier this year. It proposes \$3 million per year in funding to the Northwest Straits Commission. Both bills now await full House and Senate votes before they can become law. Additionally, U.S. Representative Larsen is reaching out to MRCs to schedule site visits at their local project sites in August.

Science Advisory Committee: The Committee has held consultations with five MRCs on project proposals. Each MRC was offered the opportunity and five followed up to request a consultation. The Committee is also identifying ways to engage with MRCs in order to provide specialized individual advice on specific topics of expertise and ensure MRCs are receiving multiple perspectives as a full Committee.

Business Items

Staff shared updates on the following business items:

NWSC Meeting Norms Agreement: At the January 2025 NW Straits Commission meeting, Commissioners and staff reviewed and approved the NW Straits Commission Meeting Norms document. To encourage participation in the norms, Commissioners suggested and approved creating an agreement document for NW Straits Commission members and staff to sign. Staff provided the agreement document for Commissioners and staff to sign.



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MRC Conference November 7 & 8: Registration for the MRC Conference will be available in August! Stay tuned to the [2025 Conference Website](#) for more information as planning is well underway, and subcommittees are working hard to outline their sessions and invite speakers.

Strategic Plan Poster: NW Straits Commission staff prepared a draft strategic plan poster that illustrates the key points of the recently approved internal-facing strategic plan. The poster is meant to be used as an external-facing communications tool. The Executive Committee voiced their support for the poster. The NW Straits Commission approved the poster by consensus and can be viewed on the [NW Straits Commission website](#).

Blue Schools Initiative Letter of Support: The Northwest Maritime Center recently presented to the NW Straits Commission on their Blue Schools Initiative. They submitted a \$2.35M Congressional Directed Spending Request to Senator Cantwell's office to support this initiative. They have requested a letter of support from the NW Straits Commission. The NW Straits Commission approved the letter of support by consensus.

Blaine Marine Economy and Research Institute for Sustainability (MERIS)

Steve Seymour presented about the Blaine Marine Economy and Research Institute for Sustainability (MERIS). MERIS is a Blaine-based marine-centric multi-use hub for industry, community, and applied research builds upon existing local resources and networks unique to Blaine, Washington.

Sound IQ

Suzanne Shull and Jessica Owens provided an update about the new Sound IQ, a web-based platform for MRC and Commission data that we will be re-launching soon. Please feel free to explore the [website "soft" launch](#), which is a limited release of the site before the full launch. The goal of a soft launch is to test functionality, gather feedback, and fix issues without the visibility of a full-scale launch. We are working on video tutorials which will be included in the full launch, stay tuned for updates! Please contact info@nwstraits.org if you have feedback or questions.

MRC Reports

Clallam MRC – Alan Clark

- A Clallam Bay "shake-out paddle" took place on June 25, for the kelp monitoring team to practice with their gear and protocol and re-familiarize themselves with the site.
- Members and volunteers on the kelp monitoring team participated in filming for an educational film by Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program and NOAA collaborators.



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The film will focus on estuary restoration and nearshore habitat monitoring efforts, especially related to the Elwha River and salmon recovery.

Island MRC – Ken Collins

- The MRC has a new coordinator! We are pleased to welcome Elise Adams.
- The MRC had the pleasure of meeting with Representative Larsen (WA 2nd congressional district) at the Keystone Reserve.
- The MRC reviewed and added comments to the Island County Comprehensive Plan
- Kelp Kayak monitoring has begun thanks to lead Carter Webb!

Jefferson MRC – Jeff Taylor

- ShrimpFest tabling event, attended June 21. 5 MRC members and 1 past MRC member volunteered to table from 9am-6pm and made 168 direct contacts.
- Crabbing 101 (Catch more Crab) Workshop was held on June 25. 16 attendees heard from 3 speakers (Jason Morgan, NWSF; Liz Tobin, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, and Daniel Sund, WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife) on derelict crab pots and the importance of properly placing pots out, crab identification, fisheries management and regulation, and a hands-on demonstration from MRC member Troy McKelvey on how to assemble and place a crab pot.

San Juan MRC – Karin Roemers-Klevin

- Dock talks are well underway for the summer. Our interns are connecting with boaters about best practices to lessen their impact on marine habitats, passing out whale warning flags, and providing resources for a safe boating experience.
- Plastic Free Salish Sea is celebrating Plastic Free July with a social media campaign on Facebook and Instagram to share ideas for how to cut down on single use plastics and educate about plastic recycling.
- The MRC is helping plan and support the San Juan Local Integrating Organization for a local forum with the Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council in late August. Several MRC members will offer their subject matter expertise through presentations or conversations on a boat tour to see some of the key issues faced in San Juan waters.

Skagit MRC – Pete Haase

- MRC Member and former Project Lead of the Salish Sea Stewards, Darla Gay Smith received special recognition from the Skagit MRC for her countless contributions in building a successful Salish Sea Stewards training program.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining stats from January 2024 – June 2025 we captured a total of 3,935 fish representing 23 unique species. In June we caught 2 Chinook and a big striped surf perch (have only ever caught a couple of these)



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- This year approximately 5,600 juvenile pinto abalone were outplanted at 8 sites in Skagit including 3 brand new sites.

Snohomish MRC – Tim Ellis

- Two MRC members conducted crabber outreach on July 5 and 6 and spoke with 122 crabbers at the Port of Everett.
- The marine vegetation subcommittee is working to plan an outreach event focused on the kelp and eelgrass of Mukilteo and Hat Island. The event will be held on September 10 at the Rose Hill Community Center in Mukilteo.

Whatcom MRC – Rick Beauregard

- Applications for Whatcom County's Vessel Turn-In event closed on July 15, with vessel turn in and recycling starting on July 28. A media day will be held on site for the project team, invited media, and elected officials on August 6.
- The first bull kelp monitoring survey will occur at Aiston Preserve on July 25. Surveys at Cherry Point, Southwest Lummi Island, and Point Whitehorn will occur in August.
- The Whatcom MRC needs a Chair, and has two vacancies, both for recreation interest positions.

Project Updates

European Green Crab Update: Allie Simpson provided an update on European Green Crab management in Drayton Harbor and Samish Bay. In Drayton Harbor, 381 green crabs were caught out of 1,800 traps that were set. Staff work closely with WA Dept. Of Fish & Wildlife as well as partners from other organizations including US Fish and Wildlife to trap Drayton Harbor. Most green crabs are captured from the "Pillars" site and mouth of Dakota Creek.

Commissioner Updates

Puget Sound Partnership: The Partnership is in the process of executing their new funding agreement with US Environmental Protection Agency. This agreement includes funds that support the NW Straits Commission, including support that routes on to the MRCs. The Partnership is still operating under a state spending freeze on contracts, hiring and travel, and they expect that to continue for the foreseeable future. The Leadership Council will meet in San Juan on August 20-21. The 2026-2030 Draft Action Agenda is now in the first steps of Tribal review.

Public Comment and Partner Updates

There was no public comment.



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