



Minutes

August 29, 2025, 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

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

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

Absent: Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission)

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting with the Tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

The Commission approved the July meeting minutes by consensus.

Committee Updates

Executive Committee: The Committee discussed fundraising guidelines, the MRC Full Potential conference session, and recommended the 2026 NW Straits Commission meeting dates be brought to the NW Straits Commission for approval.

External Relations Committee: The Committee shared the NOAA award for fiscal year 2024 was approved. U.S. Representative Rick Larsen held several site visits in the region during the August Congressional recess, with San Juan and Snohomish MRCs hosting at project sites. The NW Straits reauthorization bill is still pending in this session of Congress. After committee markup the House and Senate versions are slightly different and would require reconciliation if passed.

Science Advisory Committee: The August Committee meeting was cancelled; however, the Committee has been in conversation about their role in the 2025 MRC Conference.

Conference Updates

Conference Registration is Live: Registration for the 2025 MRC Conference is live, check your email to register! Please visit the [website](#) for information on registration, hotels, meals, and the agenda. Please do not forward registration to anyone. Registration closes October 7!

Inviting Guests to the Conference Keynote: Conference attendees may invite a guest to attend the keynote dinner on November 7 for a small fee. Details about fees are included in the registration.



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If you are interested in bringing a guest, please fill out the information on the registration form. If you have questions, email Caitlyn Blair (info@nwstraits.org).

Conference Session: MRC Full Potential: There will be a conference session called "Reaching your MRC's Full Potential" where MRCs can share and gather successful project strategies from other MRCs and identify barriers and opportunities in reaching your MRC's full potential. MRC members are encouraged to discuss these items prior to the conference to get conversations started. This session will be highly collaborative and interactive. If you have questions, please reach out to Sasha (horst@nwstraits.org).

Conference Session: Collaborative Networking: Jessica shared the Collaborative Networking activity will include lightning round presentations on projects, then round table networking about the projects. MRC members are encouraged to share about project successes, lessons learned, and other project related material. If your MRC is interested in participating, reach out to Jessica Owens (owens@nwstraits.org). Materials are due by September 19.

Business Items

Staff gave updates on the following business items:

Draft 2026 NWSC Meeting Dates: The draft NWSC meeting schedule for 2026 was reviewed by the Commission. The dates will be brought to the September in-person meeting for final approval.

Funding and budget update: The FY24 NOAA grant has been awarded. Also in process is the funding agreement with the Puget Sound Partnership for U.S. EPA funding for the Commission. The NW Straits Commission is very appreciative of Jason Lim and other staff at the Puget Sound Partnership for their support and help securing the EPA funding. MRC staff have been informed about these budget updates.

September NW Straits Commission meeting on San Juan Island: The September NW Straits Commission meeting will be on September 26 at the San Juan Island Grange. Please visit the [website](#) for additional meeting information and stay tuned as we will send more details leading up to the meeting.

Project Updates

Whatcom Vessel Turn-in Event: The Port of Bellingham, Whatcom MRC, Whatcom County, Nooksack Indian Tribe, Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Washington State Department of Ecology, Northwest Straits Commission, and other partners hosted a free vessel turn-in recycling event, which is still underway. The event is part of DNR's vessel turn-in program to prevent derelict or abandoned boats and protect marine habitats. 29 vessels were turned in and 22 were deconstructed and recycled. The remaining boats are awaiting testing to deconstruct. The event will wrap up in the next few weeks.



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Approval of 2025-27 MRC Grant Proposals

The Commission approved the 2025-27 MRC grant proposals by consensus.

MRC Reports

Clallam MRC – Alan Clark

- The MRC has been awarded an alternative funding source through the Strait Ecosystem Recovery Network to begin in October 2025 for the Elwha Stewardship project (SaniKan and dog waste bags).
- Pinto abalone survey dives in the Port Angeles subregion and surveys of both Freshwater Bay and Clallam Bay are planned within the next month.
- Forage fish sampling was briefly paused at Elwha Beach, with guidance from WDFW, due to safety concerns following the Indian Creek fuel spill. Sampling is now safely resuming.

Island MRC – Ken Collins

- Pacific herring eggs were found at Cavalero Beach!
- Completion of three Hoypus Point and Cornet Bay stewardship events this summer.
- Shark Lady has finally been removed from Holmes Harbor!

Jefferson MRC – Jeff Taylor

- Development of Outreach and Education video for Wooden Boat Festival/future O+E events underway.
- Seaweed Pressing Workshop was held on August 8. 12 attendees met in the WSU Classroom to hear a lecture on seaweed anatomy, ecology, and regional kelp and eelgrass work. Participants then watched a seaweed pressing demo and created their own pressings.

San Juan MRC – Christina Koons

- The MRC was well represented at the San Juan County Fair through an informational booth and a Litter Critter Lab hosted by Plastic Free Salish Sea. It was a great way to engage the public in our work and share the message of marine resource protection and restoration.
- San Juan MRC is recruiting for a youth position to join the committee. In early August the County Council approved and enthusiastically supported adding up to two youth positions on the committee to hear from young people about their concerns and ideas to support valuable marine resources, habitats and all those who enjoy them.
- Recent connections with state leadership include a site visit from Rep. Rick Larsen and NWSC Governor's appointee Jamie Stephens to view progress of the Jackson Beach restoration and MRC participation at the San Juan Local Forum for Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council.

Skagit MRC – Lynne Wenberg



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- Nearshore Assessment and Priorities ([NEAP Story Map](#) and [NEAP Tool](#)) now available on the Skagit MRC website and the new SoundIQ! A video tutorial will be available soon.
- Two recent articles about native oyster restoration including interviews with Skagit MRC member Paul Dinnel about our oyster restoration work in Fidalgo Bay. Paul is also working with University of Washington students to measure the diversity of marine critters in native oyster restoration areas compared to areas with no oysters at various locations in Puget Sound.

Snohomish MRC – Tim Ellis

- 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.
- Cali, the Marine Ecology Intern, has created a few Instagram reels of our kelp monitoring that have been shared on the NW Straits Instagram. Check them out!

Whatcom MRC – Rick Beauregard

- The MRC completed kelp surveys at Aiston Preserve on August 8, Cherry Point/Gulf Rd. and SW Lummi Island on August 9th and Point Whitehorn on August 22.
- The MRC will be tabling at upcoming outreach events including Run with the Chums (part of Whatcom Water Week) on September 13th and Bellingham SeaFeast on September 27.

Commissioner Updates

Puget Sound Partnership: Jason Lim shared that due to uncertainties at the federal level, the spending and hiring freeze will continue indefinitely. The governor's leadership team has wrapped up the interviewing process for the executive director position. They will hopefully have the position filled soon.

Public Comment and Partner Updates

There was no public comment.