



Minutes

Northwest Straits Commission Meeting

August 28, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Attendees

Commission Members: Jamie Stephens (Chair), Lynne Wenberg (Vice-Chair, Skagit), Rick Beauregard (Whatcom), Alan Clark (Clallam), Ken Collins (Island), Emily Grason, Brenda Johnson (Jefferson), Jason Lim (Puget Sound Partnership-Alternate), Mike Ramsey (San Juan), Phil Salditt (Snohomish), Elsa Schwartz

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Dana Oster, Jessica Owens, Allie Simpson, Leah Skare, Jeff Whitty, Katalin Chapman, Suzanne Shull

Others in Attendance: Sunny L. Jardine, Darla Gay Smith (Skagit MRC member), Alex Stote (DNR)

Absent: Cecilia Gobin (Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission), Mindy Roberts (Puget Sound Partnership)

Welcome and Tribal Acknowledgement

Jamie Stephens opened the meeting with the Tribal Acknowledgment and introductions.

The July 24, 2026, Northwest Straits Commission meeting minutes and 2027 NW Straits Commission Meeting Schedule were approved by consensus.

Speed Date with a Scientist: The Economics of Harmful Algal Blooms

Dr. Sunny L. Jardine, Assistant Professor at University of Washington's School of Marine & Environmental Affairs, presented on the economics of harmful algal blooms. Specifically, her presentation shared the economic impacts of Pseudo-nitzschia algal blooms on Dungeness crab fisheries. These algal blooms release domoic acid, a neurotoxin which concentrates up the food chain and can impact human health. Dr. Jardine's research investigates the effectiveness of evisceration orders and how fisheries of different sizes are affected. Please visit [Speed Dating with Scientists](#) to review past speakers and contact information.

Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Reports

Clallam MRC – Alan Clark

- The Clallam kelp team completed three kelp surveys on our monitored beds.
- Ed Bowlby, pigeon guillemot project lead, gave a field tour and presentation for Clallam County Commissioner Mark Ozias and the WA Association of Counties leadership team.
- Ann Soule gave an introduction at the Salish Sea Alliance workshop at the Dungeness River Nature Center on Clallam MRC.



- Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) trainings are fully booked with 30 participants and a waitlist.

Island MRC – Ken Collins

- The MRC has spent the last few months Strategic Planning for 2027-2030. They are planning to bring “lessons learned” and a framework to build a strategic plan to the November MRC Conference.
- Island MRC is partnering with Skagit MRC to host a legislative visit on September 18 to look at Bowman Bay and Cornet Bay.

Jefferson MRC – Brenda Johnson

- The No-Anchor Zone team met on August 8 and took a donated Taylor boat out to Mystery Bay and Port Hadlock and cleaned every buoy, 5 at Mystery Bay and 5 at Port Hadlock. A fair bit of epibiota was present, but all in all things seemed ok. One of the five buoys at Port Hadlock was very low in the water because the plastic on the buoy had imploded and wrinkled. Next visit they will install a new one in its place.
- Members are presenting at next month’s Wooden Boat Festival outreach event for the second week of September.
- The Mystery Bay Management Plan headed by the State Department of Health is still being updated. Updates include dock infrastructure updates and harvesting guidelines.

San Juan MRC – Mike Ramsey

- The MRC represented at the San Juan County Fair with a booth in conjunction with the San Juan County Department of Environmental Stewardship. MRC members Dr. Olivia Graham and Flora Vaught presented about eelgrass and MRC outreach at the Green Village Speaker Series.
- MRC members finalized scoring as the citizens advisory group for Salmon Recovery ranking the socio-economic value of proposed salmon recovery projects. Two projects will move forward: one to remove key stressors located in eelgrass such as creosote pilings, derelict docks, floats, and boathouses; the second is to pursue a conservation easement at an undeveloped shoreline parcel.
- Plastic Free Salish Sea participated in the San Juan County Fair Trashion Fashion show by crafting outfits made from boat shrink wrap and plastic film recycling bin materials. The key messaging was that our society is so dependent on plastic that it is time to start new and work towards being plastic free! Fairgoers were hopefully inspired by this message to think before they shrink (wrap) their boats!

Skagit MRC – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

- The primary Lone Tree kelp bed has increased dramatically in size and density since June, 2026! The kelp looks very healthy. In addition, there were two new beds and other areas of kelp spread throughout the shoreline segments growing in shallow areas with eelgrass.



- The MRC voted to establish new subcommittees to help implement the actions in the MRC's 5-Year Strategic Plan. Subcommittees include: Communications, Recruitment, Science, Project Leads, and Executive Subcommittees. The next step is to assign subcommittee leads.
- The MRC Recruitment Subcommittee identified gaps and created a list of places, people, organizations etc. to pursue for potential candidates. They created a new [MRC Recruitment webpage](#), a link to which is also provided on the [MRC homepage](#).

Snohomish MRC – Phil Salditt

- August kelp monitoring was successful at Edmonds and Hat Island. The Hat Island bed had a Gray Whale feeding in it!
- The MRC and Washington State University Beach Watchers are hosting an Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol (ETAP) beach cleanup at Howarth Park on September 26.
- The MRC will be tabling at Sustainamania on September 26 from 10am-2pm.
- The MRC had a summer picnic instead of their typical monthly meeting.

Whatcom MRC – Rick Beauregard

- The MRC and volunteers returned to North Chuckanut Bay on August 11 to establish 3 Olympia oyster restoration plots. In total, 24 people participated, representing the Whatcom MRC, City of Bellingham, Northwest Maritime Center, Bellingham Technical College, Western Washington University, Washington Conservation Corps, Lummi Natural Resources, the Nooksack tribe, the Garden of the Salish Sea Curriculum, and the NWSC.
- The two MRC Wildcat Cove interns conclude their internship at the end of August. They provided a fantastic presentation to the full MRC during the August 6 meeting and will be meeting with State Parks staff to provide an overview of their findings and recommendations for future actions.
- The MRC has a few upcoming outreach events including a stream and beach walk during Whatcom Water Week on September 15, tabling at Bellingham SeaFeast on September 26, and is working on putting together an activity for Orca Recovery Day on October 17.

Committee Updates

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee did not meet this month, though they voted on the Environmental Leadership Award and have chosen their awardee. The awardee will be celebrated at the MRC Conference.

External Relations Committee

The Committee met to discuss legislative site visits, including the combined Skagit and Island counties site visit. Snohomish is also planning a legislative visit.



Alan Clark discussed the state budget and proviso with State Senator Mike Chapman and encouraged MRC members to reach out to the Governor's office to share the importance of MRC work.

Science Advisory Committee (SAC)

Emily Grason emphasized the Science Advisory Committee's offer of a collaborative session with MRCs is still open. Please contact Dana Oster (oster@nwstraits.org) by September 18 if your MRC is interested.

The SAC will meet in-person in September to prepare for the SAC Pre-Conference Workshop, which already has a large number of registrations.

Business Items

Brainstorm on discussion topics for future Commission meetings

Commissioners suggested:

- A follow up on the "Reaching your MRC's Full Potential" session from the 2025 conference. A mini-forum on challenges and successes of each MRC, perhaps at a future retreat or portion of an in-person commission meeting.
- A presentation and discussion on how different organizations fit together. For example, the role of Puget Sound Partnership, Salish Sea Alliance, NW Straits Commission, MRCs, Local Integrating Organizations (LIOs), Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. Specifically, guidance on how to discuss these partnerships with the public, a visual aid, and a chronological map of when these different entities and their work started.

September Commission meeting reminder

The Commission will meet in-person in Island County on Friday September 25, from 10:30AM to 3:30PM at Ebey's Landing and Pacific Rim Institute. More information will be available on our [events page](#).

Discussion: Proposed updates to mooring buoy statute

The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is proposing changes to the mooring buoy statute [79.105.430](#) during the 2027 legislative session to address the management issues surrounding recreational mooring buoys on state-owned aquatic lands. NW Straits Commission is submitting a letter of comment sharing support for the statute, while emphasizing the need to ensure a process is created to address existing buoys and the need to fund enforcement to ensure proper installation and maintenance along with removing those that are unpermitted and trespassing. The Commission approved the Executive Committee to finalize and submit a comment letter by consensus. Commissioners interested will provide thoughts on the letter to Dana by the end of next week. Dana will draft the letter for Executive Committee review.



Please see DNR's [public comment page](#) or reach out to Buoy-Comments@dnr.wa.gov to provide your thoughts by September 14, 2026.

Northwest Straits Commissioner Updates

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

There was no update this month.

Puget Sound Partnership

Jason shared the following updates:

- The NW Straits Marine Conservation Initiative reauthorization bill has passed the House and is expected to pass the Senate shortly. Follow progress of the NW Straits reauthorization bill through the [House](#) and [Senate](#).
- The [Floodplain Enhancement and Recovery Act](#) has been introduced and successfully hotlined by the Senate, reducing barriers to ecosystem restoration work in floodplains.
- Rep. Strickland introduced the [6 PPD Task Force Act](#), which establishes a federal task force to research and develop replacements for toxic tire chemicals (6 PPD) threatening fish, particularly coho salmon.
- The [biomass of spawning Pacific Herring indicator](#) has been published with 2025 data, showing mixed results.
- The first [comprehensive report](#) on bioaccumulation of pollutants in nearshore caged mussels has been published.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 12:27 PM.

*The next meeting of the Northwest Straits Commission will be on September 25 at Ebey's Landing and the Pacific Rim Institute at 180 Parker Rd, Coupeville, WA 98239
Information can be found on our [events page](#).*