



Minutes

August 26, 2022 10:00 AM-12:00PM
Zoom - Virtual meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Chris Castner, Julia Parrish, Alan Clark (Clallam), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Christina Koons (San Juan), Dianne Hennebert (Skagit), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Bob Cecile (Whatcom)

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Dana Oster, Allie Simpson, Jeff Whitty, Nathan Woods

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Chris Mantegna, Troy McKelvey (Jefferson), Karin Roemers-Kleven (San Juan), Austin Rose (Whatcom)

Absent: Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Laura Blackmore, Nan McKay, Tom Cowan (Vice Chair)

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment. The Commission approved the minutes from the July 29 meeting as written by consensus.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Lucas Hart reported for the Executive Committee. The Committee recommended approval of the proposed 2023 Commission meeting schedule and addition of an October 28, 2022 Commission meeting date. Senator Murray continues to lead on the NW Straits Initiative reauthorization bill. The Senator's staff is working with the Senate Commerce Committee to introduce the legislation in the next session.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia Parrish reported the Science Advisory Committee continues to recruit speakers for Speed Dating with Scientists.

External Relations Committee: Chris Castner reported that Senator Murray's staff are in frequent communication about progress on the NW Straits reauthorization bill. Senator Lovelett will speak at the Collaborative Conservation Workshop. Lucas extended an invitation to Senator Murray to speak at the Collaborative Conservation Workshop, but her schedule is pending.

Business items

- FY22 Congressionally Directed Spending update – Sasha reported that Commission staff distributed a memo, timeline, and project forms for the NW Straits Congressionally Directed Spending to MRCs for one-time funding for 2023. Those agreements will begin January 1, 2023.
- Green Crab update – Jeff reported that fieldwork continues for green crab removal in both Drayton Harbor and Samish Bay. The Washington Conservation Corps crew is finishing their last week trapping on August 25. Jeff and Leah continue to recruit volunteers to help with trapping and outreach. NW Straits Commission staff collaborated with Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, NW Straits Foundation, and Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC) to sample Clayton Beach and neighboring Upper Skagit areas. Additionally, NW Straits Commission staff collaborated with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources, Samish Indian Nation, VCC, Puget Sound Corps, Washington Sea Grant, and Padilla Bay Reserve to conduct a green crab-sampling blitz in Fidalgo Bay.
- Derelict vessel removal planning – Lucas reported NW Straits Commission staff held a meeting with the Department of Natural Resources and tribal partners to strategize on options for removing derelict vessels from tribally owned tidelands.
- Collaborative Conservation Workshop September 16 update – Nathan reported that Senator Lovelett has agreed to speak at the September 16 Collaborative Conservation Workshop. Workshop registrants will receive an email soon that will include the workshop agenda and details about the event, including how to complete the required health screening.

Yellow Island Intertidal Monitoring Project: Chris Mantegna presented to the Northwest Straits Commission. Chris developed this project, with funding from the Doris Duke Conservation Scholar Program, to create opportunities for underserved groups to engage in conservation. Students from various disciplines monitored Yellow Island by cataloging presence and abundance of observed species. Chris hopes to increase the scale and involve other partner organizations in similar student driven monitoring efforts in the future. Learn more about the program [here](#), or find contact information on Chris and other presenters in the Speed Dating with Scientists series [here](#).

Partner updates

Puget Sound Partnership: No report from the Partnership

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don Hunger reported the NW Straits Foundation staff met with an engineers and contractors at Hoypus Point to discuss restoration work scheduled to start in October. Boeing gave the NW Straits Foundation a \$50,000 grant to fund restoration work at new sites. Don extended an invitation to Commission meeting attendees for the Caroline Gibson Scholars event on September 23, 4-6pm at the Northwest Maritime Center 431 Water Street Port Townsend, WA 98368. Register for the event [here](#).

MRC Updates

MRCs provided full written reports that are available in the [pre-meeting materials](#). Highlights are included below:

Clallam – Alan Clark

- Freshwater Bay kayak survey took place July 31.
- Forage Fish sampling continues monthly at Cline Spit and Ediz Hook and Elwha beaches East and West.
- Clallam MRC member Bob Vreeland and volunteer Coleman Byrnes sampling Freshwater Bay and Pillar Point for shellfish Biotoxin on a monthly basis.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- Cornet Bay Stewardship Weeding for Whales event was August 6.
- Atlantis Steam ROV Camp occurred at Coupeville Wharf July 29.

Jefferson – Troy McKelvey

- The MRC organized two rain garden work parties on July 29 and August 17, engaging two MRC members and eleven community volunteers, and will be installing a new rain garden next month.
- The MRC contracted an eelgrass survey along the Port Townsend waterfront, which took place the week of July 25.
- The MRC supported the local PT Maritime Discovery Schools Teacher Training program, providing presentations to teachers from Jefferson and Clallam counties on the nearshore ecosystem (what it is, local issues, and restoration and caretaking efforts) as well as the MRCs Olympia oyster restoration work.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- San Juan MRC held successful elections of MRC Chair, Vice-chair, and NW Straits Commission representative and alternate.
- Sinking of Aleutian Isle continues to be of critical concern and MRC is providing support as called upon.
- Projects such as visitor surveys and *Ulva* sampling at False Bay, and vessel surveys throughout the county, are on target.

Skagit – Dianne Hennebert

- The final Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance work party took place August 8. Over 18 volunteers participated including eight or nine volunteers from Crane Aerospace and several new and veteran Salish Sea Stewards. Plant maintenance included weeding, watering, and spreading 7 cubic yards of bark with buckets.
- Fidalgo Bay Day occurred Saturday, August 20 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. More to report next month.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- Snohomish MRC is currently reviewing the draft of the Port Susan Phase 1 final report completed by ESA. Staff will meet on August 18 to discuss the draft before completing a final report in early September.
- The Meadowdale Monitoring Plan is now complete. Next steps include the creation of a Meadowdale Monitoring webpage to host on the MRC website, and the creation of a story map.

- The MRC is hosting a beach cleanup at Picnic Point Park on September 24 in partnership with WSU Snohomish County Beach Watchers and Zero Waste Washington.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- The MRC has a vacancy for an economic interest position. This vacancy is advertised on the MRC homepage <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/>

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff will share as a separate document to MRC staff and the Commission:

- **Northwest Straits Commission meeting schedule:** The Commission approved the remaining 2022 dates and the 2023 schedule. See attached schedule for details.
- **Derelict Vessel Removal:** MRCs and tribal partners are compiling prioritization lists for derelict vessel removal to distribute to NW Straits Commission staff. Contact your MRC Coordinator or Lucas Hart (hart@nwstraits.org) for more information.
- **Northwest Straits Initiative Collaborative Conservation Workshop:** Senator Lovelett agreed to speak at the Sept. 16 Collaborative Conservation Workshop. Workshop registrants – watch for an email that will include the workshop agenda and details about the event, including how to complete the required health screening.
- **Congressionally Directed Spending:** NOAA awarded Congressionally Directed Spending for the Northwest Straits Commission for 2023. Funding becomes available January 1 – December 31, 2023. Northwest Straits Commission staff provided instructions for project applications to MRC coordinators.
- **Yellow Island Intertidal Monitoring Project:** Chris Mantegna presented to the Northwest Straits Commission. Chris developed this project, with funding from the Doris Duke Conservation Scholar Program, to create opportunities for underserved groups to engage in conservation. Students from various disciplines monitored Yellow Island by cataloging presence and abundance of observed species. Chris hopes to increase the scale and involve other partner organizations in similar student driven monitoring efforts in the future. Learn more about the program [here](#), or find contact information on Chris and other presenters in the Speed Dating with Scientists series [here](#).
- **Northwest Straits Initiative Reauthorization:** Senator Murray continues to lead the effort for a federal reauthorization of the NW Straits Initiative. Preliminary plans indicate the bill may be introduced in the US Senate after the August recess.

Public comment

Elsa Schwartz invited people to attend the 2022 Coastal and Estuarine Summit, Dec 4-8 in New Orleans. Register [here](#). Early bird registration through Oct 7. The Summit brings together the coastal restoration and management communities to explore issues, solutions, and lessons learned in their work. The Summit Program will address all aspects of coastal and estuarine restoration and management.

September 30, 2022 - The next Northwest Straits Commission meeting: 10am-12pm via Zoom. Find more information [on our website](#).