



Minutes

January 26, 2024 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Sarah Fiskén (Jefferson – Alternate), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Mike MacKay (Whatcom), Ken Collins (Island), Ginny Broadhurst, Karin Roemers-Klevin (San Juan), Ahren Stroming (Puget Sound Partnership – Alternate), Cecilia Gobin

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

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation)

Absent: Julia Parrish, Laura Blackmore

Welcome and Introductions:

Tim Ellis welcomed the group with introductions and the tribal acknowledgement.

The December NW Straits Commission minutes were approved by consensus.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Alan shared that the Committee recommended moving MRC Report sharing at NW Straits Commission meetings to earlier in the meeting, so MRC's have more opportunity to share updates with attendees. The Executive Committee recommended holding a virtual NW Straits Commission meeting in March due to the retreat that will be scheduled for later in 2024. The NW Straits Commission approved holding a meeting on March 29 by consensus.

Science Advisory Committee: The Committee sent invitations to add new members. Dr. Kathryn Sobocinski has been trained and onboarded. The Committee has their first meeting of 2024 next week, where they will choose the Committee representative for the NW Straits Initiative conference planning committee.

External Relations Committee: Lucas shared that the Committee is working on federal reauthorization and is currently awaiting updates on the federal reauthorization bill.

Business Items

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

NW Straits Initiative Conference Planning Committee: Caitlyn is looking to establish the 2024 planning committee for the NW Straits Initiative conference. If you are interested in being on the conference planning committee, please contact Caitlyn Blair (blair@nwstraits.org).



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Kelp Kayak Monitoring Update: Jeff hosted a virtual gathering to showcase the 2023 achievements for MRC volunteers and partner presenters, including the monitoring of 22 kelp beds by 54 participants covering 258 miles in the NW Straits region. Jeff also reviewed the data and monitored trends through the years. [Learn more about kelp kayak monitoring.](#)

Green Crab Update: The NW Straits Initiative is reviewing our long-term role in green crab trapping and monitoring. The funding for green crab monitoring from the Department of Fish and Wildlife will end in 2025. The NW Straits Commission recommends establishing an ad hoc committee for interested Commission members to discuss and decide on the Commission's role beyond that time. The NW Straits Commission approved the recommendation, by consensus, to establish an ad hoc committee. If you are a NW Straits Commission representative or alternate and are interested in being part of the ad hoc committee, please contact Lucas (hart@nwstraits.org).

2023 Impact Report update and timeline: Jessica Owens is working on the 2023 Impact Report. There will be a "soft launch" review session during February 12-16. If there are NW Straits Commission members that are interested in reviewing or giving final edits, please contact Jessica (owens@nwstraits.org).

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark

- Clallam County MRC continued forage fish sampling on three beaches.
- The MRC interviewed for a part time MRC Administrative Assistant.
- The MRC scheduled a joint meeting with Jefferson County MRC in March.
- The MRC established an advisory subcommittee to continue to work on language for Clallam MRC to advise the Board of County Commissioners.

Island – Ken Collins

- Island County MRC was able to present their white paper to County Commissioners, and it was well received. In their letter, they included information and concerns about shoreline armoring.

Jefferson – Sarah Fisker

- The MRC voted on its 2024 Executive Committee at their December monthly meeting. The MRC is appointing Gordon King as Chair, Betsy Carlson as Vice Chair, Jeff Taylor as the NWSC representative, and Sarah Fisker as the NWSC alternate.

San Juan – Karin Roemers -Kleven

- The local Sea Scout Troop was able to salvage emergency equipment and personal floatation devices from the Islander, an abandoned party barge the derelict vessel team



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has been working with to get removed from county waters. It currently is sitting on land in Anacortes and waiting to be demolished.

- The Plastic Free Salish Sea initiative has concluded a reporting contest for beach and road stewards. Heidi Laursen of Orcas Island recorded over 10 hours of removing microplastics and debris from local beaches and has won \$100 gift certificate to Friday Harbor House. We hope this will inspire more stewards to report their efforts and contribute to growing data of plastic pollution in the Salish Sea.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- **Olympia Oyster Restoration in Fidalgo Bay Report (Year 21):** The report was prepared by Paul Dinnel with results from the 2023 bay-wide native oyster population monitoring effort. The oyster population in Fidalgo Bay has increased from 3 million to over 5.5 million in just 5 years and has expanded their range beyond the original restoration areas. Recent article in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#).
- **Salish Sea Stewards Training:** There are 24 participants registered. Registration closes January 31st. Classes start Tuesday, February 6, 1-5pm at Padilla Bay. Training curriculum is close to being finalized and will be posted on the Skagit MRC website. Recent article in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#).
- **Kayak-Based Kelp Surveys:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit MRC member), and Jeff Whitty (NWSC) were recently interviewed by the Skagit Valley Herald for an article on kelp.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- In partnership with the WSU Beach Watchers, the Starlight Beach Walk is scheduled for the evening of February 6th from 7pm – 8:30pm at Olympic Beach.
- The strategic planning subcommittee held a kick-off meeting on January 9. The group is currently finalizing interview questions to be used in individual interviews with MRC members to coalesce ideas of where the MRC should be headed.
- The County Commission approved three new members be added to the MRC.

Whatcom – Mike MacKay

- The MRC has received approval from Lummi Natural Resources to conduct 3 days of sampling/seining with 4th grade students. To accommodate as many students as possible at the seine events, the MRC plans an activity at the park with half the students while the others are participating in the seine, then the groups swap. Volunteer help is needed.
- Whatcom County is commencing its 2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, and Planning and Development Services (PDS) staff are soliciting recommendations from the Marine Resources Committee on what amendments should be considered in the Marine Resources Lands section of Chapter 8, Resource Lands, and Chapter 10, Environment.



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Partner Updates

NW Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin shared that she is waiting for the final review of a letter to the Dept of Interior requesting her appointment to the NW Straits Commission as the tribal representative. Cecilia also shared that the NW Indian Fisheries Commission is working on nearshore habitat protections and is working with the Army Corps of Engineers to improve the process for approving shoreline armoring permits.

NW Straits Foundation: Don Hunger shared updates for the NW Straits Foundation. Doug McCutcheon has been appointed as a new board member. If MRC members are interested in participating as a board member on the NW Straits Foundation, please contact Don (don@nwstraitsfoundation.org). The NW Straits Foundation also recently hired a communications staff member, Kayla Mrozik.

Puget Sound Partnership: Ahren Stroming shared that the Puget Sound Partnership's strategic funding team is almost fully staffed. The Partnership has also launched their [Puget Sound Rapid Recovery Acceleration Funding Tool](#).

Ahren also shared that Puget Sound Day on the Hill is scheduled for May 13th through May 17th. NW Straits Commission members are invited to attend. Federal Reauthorization of the NW Straits Initiative is one of three key priorities for the Day on the Hill.

The Partnership also wanted to ensure that the Commission and MRCs are aware of their [Nearshore Conservation Credit Program](#). If MRCs have nearshore conservation projects in need of funding, they are encouraged to submit proposals.

Public Comment

No public comment.