



Minutes

January 31, 2025, 10:00 AM-3:00 PM
In-Person meeting, Coupeville Library, Coupeville WA
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Mike MacKay (Whatcom – Alternate), Ginny Broadhurst, Christina Koons (San Juan), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit), Jamie Stephens, Elsa Schwartz, Emily Grason

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

Others in Attendance: Jill Lipoti, Kelly Webb, Patrick Havel, Nan McKay, Sarah Fiskén (Jefferson – Alternate)

Absent: Ken Collins (Island), Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission)

Welcome and Introductions:

Tim opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

The Commission approved the December 2024 meeting minutes as written by consensus.

The Commission appointed Elsa as the chair for the External Relations Committee.

The Commission approved the Skagit MRC grant amendment.

Recognition for Nan McKay

The Commission recognized Nan McKay for her long-time contributions to the NW Straits Commission as a Governor's appointee. Nan began her first term on the Commission in 2013 and served for more than 11 years, including one year as vice-chair, three terms as chair of the Commission, and years as Chair of the External Relations Committee. Nan's brought incredible knowledge of Puget Sound issues and the network of organizations and people who work toward Puget Sound conservation.

Committee Updates:

Science Advisory Committee: Emily Grason shared that the Committee met during the week of January 19. At the meeting, the Committee welcomed Emily Horton, PhD, a social scientist at U.S. Fish and Wildlife. The meeting also focused on the Committee's workplan for 2025. The Committee will also be hosting another seminar for MRC members in October, more details to come.



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External Relations Committee: Lucas shared the reauthorization bill did not pass in the 118th Congressional session that ended on January 3, 2025. Representative Larsen's staff is evaluating a strategy to reintroduce the bill this session. We continue to watch federal and state directives with changing administrations.

Executive Committee: Lucas shared that the Committee discussed the NW Straits Initiative definition and presentation for the January 31 NW Straits Commission meeting. The Committee also reviewed the norms for Courageous Conversations for NW Straits Commission adoption. Additionally, the Committee approved adding the NW Straits Commission to a letter of support for [HB 1631](#), which establishes bull kelp as the state marine forest.

Strategic Planning Committee: Lucas shared the Strategic Planning Committee, comprised of himself, Dana Oster, Sasha Horst, Jessica Owens, Ken Collins, Lynne Wenberg, Jeff Taylor, and Elsa Schwartz, met to review the NW Straits Commission mission and vision. The Committee also discussed other themes for the April Retreat. The Committee is working on drafting initial goal/objectives and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, which will be reviewed by the Commission in the future.

Public Comment and Partner Updates

Jill Lipoti, Island MRC, asked how the NWS Commission would be handling Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work moving forward as federal priorities shift to other areas. There was a discussion about next steps, such as MRCs discussing how they would like to carry this work forward.

Commissioner Updates

Salish Sea Institute – Ginny shared that the Salish Sea Institute and College of the Environment WWU are hosting a winter speaker series. Lovel Pratt, Marine Protection and Policy Director at Friends of the San Juans and San Juan MRC member, gave a presentation on [commercial shipping impacts and risks in the Salish Sea](#).

WA Sea Grant – Emily shared that following a recruitment process there is a recommendation for a new WA Sea Grant faculty director.

MRC Reports

Clallam MRC – Shared from Report



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- The MRC developed a refined draft of its roles and responsibilities for members and various member roles.
- The MRC is focused on planning its projects for the next biennium, with a retreat/workshop planned for the membership on February 24th.

Island MRC – Jill Lipoti

- The selection committee came together in mid-January to decide the winner of the Jan Holmes Award. The committee decided to welcome two other winners each year.
- The MRC has turned in a water quality QAPP for review.

Jefferson MRC – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC elected Betsy Carlson as the MRC Chair, and Emily Buckner as the Vice Chair at the December 2024 MRC meeting.
- Forage Fish – Quilcene Marina: January 21 – The MRC had a Forage Fish meeting with WDFW and Port of Port Townsend at Quilcene Marina to discuss sampling locations. Sampling will start in the next few weeks.

San Juan MRC – Christina Koons

- The MRC interviewed several great prospects for the open committee seat in early January. After deliberation, Charles Bookman of Lopez Island has been recommended to join us. Charles brings a wealth of experience and marine knowledge, and the MRC is excited to welcome him into the fold.
- The MRC also has a new County Council liaison. Jane Fuller will take the place of previous council member Cindy Wolf.
- Planning is underway for a late winter marina operators roundtable. The goal is to bring together small and large marina operators to understand what shared challenges they face and see how the MRC can assist. The roundtable is tentatively scheduled for late February.

Skagit MRC – Lynne Wenberg

- OTGP-2024 Grant Amendment: Allocated remaining grant funds to Forage Fish Monitoring and Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment Phase 3 Projects.
- The MRC formed an MRC Executive Committee consisting of MRC Staff, Chair, and Vice-Chair. The first meeting was held January 29th.
- Salish Sea Stewards Training begins February 18. There is still space available! As of January 16, there are currently 15 people registered. The maximum is 26. Classes will be held on Tuesdays from 1-5 PM at Padilla Bay.

Snohomish MRC – Tim Ellis



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- On February 8th at 7 PM, Snohomish County Beach Watchers and the MRC are hosting their annual starlight beach walk at Edmonds Olympic Beach.
- The MRC subcommittees are currently working on the annual report in Canva and deciding updates to the design.

Whatcom MRC – Mike MacKay

- The MRC approved new officer positions.
- Two members, Heather Spore and Dan Sulak departed the MRC in January.
- The MRC conducted a kickoff meeting for their 4th year of the Beach Seine with Kids project.

NW Straits Meeting Norms for Courageous Conversations

Allie presented the proposed meeting norms for courageous conversations, as well as their goals and purpose. These norms will be utilized in NW Straits Commission meetings to establish expectations and solutions for tackling difficult conversations.

The meeting norms were approved by NW Straits by consensus with the recommendation that the norms be included in the onboarding materials for NW Straits Commissioners. It was also recommended that Commissioners sign onto an agreement of the norms each year.

NW Straits Initiative Definition and Structure Presentation and Discussion

Lucas gave a presentation about the NW Straits Initiative definition that was originally drafted by the 2024 NW Straits Initiative retreat planning group and discussed during the retreat in September of that year. It was later revised by the NW Straits Commission Executive Committee. It reads: The Northwest Straits Initiative is a community-led collaboration dedicated to protecting and restoring the marine environment of northwest Washington. It is composed of the NW Straits Commission and seven locally based Marine Resources Committees. Together they identify and address priority NW Straits marine conservation issues.

The presentation addressed questions that have been asked about the definition, discussed benefits of adopting the definition and challenges it could help solve, changes that would result from adoption of the definition, and how relationships between the NW Straits Commission, MRCs, and Foundation could be structured in the future under the proposed definition.

The Commission provided feedback on the information that was shared in the presentation. Key feedback included:



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- Potential unintended consequences of adopting the definition need to be considered before moving forward
- Soliciting the Foundation's perspective is important before making any decisions
- It's important to continue acknowledging the project collaborations that happen across the NW Straits Commission, Foundation, and MRCs and how that work would change if the proposed definition were adopted

The definition will be revisited after more information can be gathered.