



Minutes

February 28, 2025, 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

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

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

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger, Bill Berger, Wayne Watne, Austin Rose

Absent: Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission)

Welcome and Introductions:

Tim opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

The Commission approved the January 2025 meeting minutes as written by consensus.

Committee Updates:

Science Advisory Committee: Emily Grason shared that the Committee is working on reviewing correspondence that will go out to MRCs, offering project consultation by members of the SAC on one new or ongoing project of each MRC.

External Relations Committee: Elsa Schwartz shared that Lucas is working on providing a NW Straits Commission 101 presentation to the new Department of Ecology Director, Casey Sixkiller.

Executive Committee: Alan Clark shared that himself, Lucas, and Tim had a meeting with Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation Director) and Betsy Lyons (NW Straits Foundation Board President) about the NW Straits Initiative definition. The Committee also shared that the Commission may be hosting Department of Ecology Director, Casey Sixkiller at the NW Straits Commission meeting in Whatcom County on July 25. The Committee also discussed the annual conference as NW Straits Commission staff are working with the Department of Ecology on a mechanism to receive payments to allow for the possibility of paid attendees at the event on November 7-8.



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Strategic Planning Update

Lucas Hart shared that the Strategic Planning Committee is working on the NW Straits Commission mission statement, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) exercise, and are in the process of securing a retreat facilitator.

Lucas facilitated an activity with meeting attendees and shared a summary of SWOT ideas the Committee came up with. Attendees added their thoughts and comments, which will be included in strategic planning materials for later discussion.

Business Items

Staff gave updates on the following business items:

NW Straits Commission Norms for Courageous Conversations: Allie Simpson shared a new example attached to Norm 4: Listen and don't assume. Staff is working on a commitment document for NW Straits Commissioners to sign.

DEI Phase 2 Wrap Up and Knowledge Base: The Commission's newly implemented [Knowledge Base](#) hosts a wealth of diversity, equity and inclusion resources for building engagement and community partnerships for MRCs. Start with the [Knowledge Base Guide](#) to see a quick description and link to each resource included in the Knowledge Base. Additionally, this Knowledge Base is meant to be built upon, and we intend to add resources to it as we continue this work. If you have/find resources you think would be beneficial to add, or have questions please contact Allie Simpson (simpson@nwstraits.org) or Caitlyn Blair (blair@nwstraits.org).

MRC Request for Proposal Policies: Sasha shared three policies for review and approval that will be incorporated into the pending MRC Request for Proposals. Two of the policies were already existing and one is new. The existing policies, including the Match Policy and Funding Policy, were approved as presented. The Commission approved by consensus the Conflict of Interest Policy with minor edits as suggested by the Commission during the meeting.

NW Straits Commission Retreat: Caitlyn reminded attendees about the NW Straits Commission retreat on April 3-4 at Padilla Bay. The retreat is held for NW Straits Commissioners, Commission staff, and MRC staff. More information about the agenda and logistics will be available in the coming weeks. If you have questions, please e-mail Caitlyn at (blair@nwstraits.org).

MRC Reports

Clallam MRC – Alan Clark



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- The MRC will hold a work session on February 24th to develop projects for the next biennium.
- The MRC will be hosting a [planting event on March 6th for the Ediz Hook revegetation project](#), in partnership with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and Clallam Conservation District. Approximately 50 local elementary students are expected to attend and help plant native beach plants.
- The MRC hosted two presenters from WA DNR – Cynthia Harbison and Bree Turner – during the February monthly meeting who shared their work on marine vegetation strategy and held a collaborative discussion with the MRC.

Island MRC – Ken Collins

- Jan Holmes Award: The selection committee came together this year, and after many years of expressing that we wish we could celebrate more volunteer's and their hard work. We decided to update the award to "volunteers" of the year. Island County has so many amazing volunteers that we want to celebrate and acknowledge. This year's winners are Barbara Bennett for service, PaulBen & Jeanie McElwain for science, and Lee Badovinus for education.
- Sound Waters University: Kirk Larsen and Kelly Zupich taught two classes at Sound Waters University. The focus was on how community science makes a difference. Our audience had a lot of great questions. We shared about how our projects make a difference in our local area. Additionally, we brought in equipment from our various projects to show participants.

Jefferson MRC – Jeff Taylor

- Interviews were held for the Marine Science Alt member position on February 7. New member, Jon Waggoner, was offered the position and accepted. He is currently being onboarded and will officially start sometime in March 2025.
- Forage fish – Quilcene Marina: January 29 – Forage Fish sampling started at Quilcene Marina.

San Juan MRC – Christina Koons

- The Great Islands Cleanup is scheduled for April 12 on Lopez Island and April 26 on Orcas, San Juan, and Shaw islands. For more information, please see the [Plastic Free Salish Sea website](#).
- Monthly beach cleanups are back! The spring schedule is filling up quickly with local organizations who are helping the MRC host and successfully remove microplastics and debris from Jackson's Beach. Check out the PFSS webpage for more info: <https://plasticfreesalishsea.org/>.



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- The MRC has been invited to participate in a North Sound Marine Vegetation Brown Bag Luncheon on April 2 from 11:30-1pm. During this time we will hear about the latest implementation strategy from the Habitat Leads who use these strategies to guide investments and steer conservation and recovery projects. Groups will be encouraged to share their challenges with marine vegetation and share efforts taken to protect and recover these important marine habitats.

Skagit MRC – Lynne Wenberg

- Salish Sea Stewards classes commenced February 18 with 24 registered participants. First class included an introduction to the Skagit MRC and a brief history of the Salish Sea Stewards presented by MRC members Pete Haase and Darla Gay Smith. The second class included an introduction to the Northwest Straits Commission presented by Lucas Hart. [2025 training schedule](#) is available on the Skagit MRC website.
- Skagit MRC is collaborating with Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Island MRC, Jefferson MRC and NWSF on a potential derelict crab pot removal project in Skagit Bay. They are exploring the possibility of using an ROV for surveying and removing derelict pots. They have scheduled a demo with Oceanbotics ROV (<https://oceanbotics.com/>) on March 11 at Cornet Bay.

Snohomish MRC – Tim Ellis

- The starlight beach walk on Saturday 2/8 was well attended with over 100 members of the public.
- The MRC subcommittees are currently working on the annual report in Canva and deciding updates to the design.

Whatcom MRC – Rick Beauregard

- 2 members, Paul Meyer and Colin Wahl were appointed to the MRC in February.
- The MRC will be reviewing drafts of the Climate and Environment Chapters for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update and providing feedback, particularly on policies related to marine resources.
- The MRC is co-hosting two workshops with the Northwest Straits Foundation: A Shore Friendly Workshop and A Shore Friendly Contractors Workshop for Whatcom & Skagit Counties.

Commissioner Updates

Salish Sea Institute: Ginny went to a herring conference in Victoria hosted by the Tsartlip Nation. She is also giving talk at Lummi Island Heritage Trust talk.

Puget Sound Partnership: Puget Sound Day on the Hill is scheduled for April 29-May 2, 2025. The NW Straits reauthorization will remain one of the key priorities. More information as the event is planned can be found at <https://psdoth.org/>.



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Public Comment and Partner Updates

The NW Straits Foundation will be holding a Caroline Gibson Scholars Event on Saturday, March 29, 1:00 – 3:30 at the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. All are welcome to attend. See the NW Straits Foundation website for more details and to RSVP.