



Minutes

April 25, 2025, 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

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

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

Others in Attendance: Rayme Ivers, Sarah Fisker (Jefferson – Alternate)

Absent: Elsa Schwartz, Cecilia Gobin (Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission), Larry Epstein (Puget Sound Partnership)

Welcome and Introductions

Tim opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

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

NW Straits Commission Chair and vice-Chair Elections

Alan Clark was elected chair and Jamie Stephens was elected the vice-chair of the NW Straits Commission. Many thanks to Tim Ellis, outgoing chair, for his service the last two years.

Committee Updates

Science Advisory Committee: Emily Grason shared that the Committee will be meeting virtually at the end of April, and in person in June. The Committee is preparing for project proposal review and the MRC project consultations. At the June meeting the Committee will review a selection of MRC project proposals. Kathy Wolf will be stepping down at the end of June; we appreciate her service on the Committee.

External Relations Committee: Lucas shared that Senator Murray and Representative Larsen have reintroduced the reauthorization bill. For updates about reauthorization, visit the NW Straits Commission [website](#). Lucas also shared that he is working with the Department of Ecology to evaluate contingency options for future funding. In April, Lucas, Alan, and Jamie updated state electees on NW Straits Commission and MRC projects.



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The NW Straits Commission signed onto a letter supporting HB 1631, which establishes bull kelp as the Washington state marine forest. The bill highlights the importance of bull kelp to marine ecosystems and regional cultures. The bill passed and was signed by Governor Ferguson on April 16, 2025. For more information, see the [King 5 Article](#).

Executive Committee: Alan Clark shared that at the March meeting, the Committee discussed Puget Sound Day on the Hill. Reauthorization is among the priorities and includes a \$10 million annual appropriations request as a placeholder. NW Straits Commission staff outlined talking points, and Puget Sound Partnership organized sign on letters; Tim Ellis signed the Day on the Hill letters on behalf of the NWSC after Executive Committee approval. The Committee also discussed NW Straits Commission strategic planning, which will be discussed in greater detail at the May NW Straits Commission meeting. Other updates from the committee included: The NW Straits Commission submitted comments on the Shoreline Management Act rules related to kelp conservation during open comment period; Commission meeting agendas have been restructured to capture time for designated Commission seats (Puget Sound Partnership and NW Indian Fisheries Commission). Updates from all others will be captured in the Public comment/partners section. A recommendation was brought forward that the Executive Committee serve as the nomination committee for the NW Straits Commission Environmental Leadership Award. The Commission approved by consensus.

Business Items

Staff gave updates on the following business items:

NW Straits Commission Norms for Courageous Conversations: Allie shared that the norms for courageous conversations were updated, and can be viewed in the [Knowledge Base](#). NW Straits Commission staff created an agreement acknowledging that the Commission will adhere to the norms. This will be brought in hard copy to be signed by Commission members at a future in-person meeting.

May Meeting – in-person in Clallam County: Caitlyn shared that the May meeting will be held at the Dungeness River Nature Center in Clallam County. Staff and others will be providing options for carpooling from Port Townsend to Sequim. Stay tuned for more information in the coming weeks about travel times and ferry information and contact info@nwstraits.org If you have questions. We look forward to seeing you there!

MRC Grants: Sasha and Dana have held consultations with each MRC about their project proposals. The due date for MRC proposals is May 29.



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Project Updates

Kelp Kayak Kickoff and Safety Training: There will be two Kayak Kickoffs for 2025 MRC kelp monitoring volunteers, the first will be at Padilla Bay from 10:00 – 2:00 PM on May 2, and the second one will be at the WSU Jefferson County Extension Office in Port Hadlock from 1:00 – 4:00 PM on May 14. There will be three kayak safety trainings for MRC kelp monitoring volunteers at Bowman Bay, Fidalgo Island on May 31 and June 1, and at North Beach, Port Townsend on June 7 (two classes per day). Registration has closed for all events but if you have any questions or would like to attend a safety training, please contact Jeff Whitty (whitty@nwstraits.org) right away.

Impact Report: The 2024 Impact Report is being shared widely and is the second most visited page on the NW Straits Commission website. If you are interested in sharing the report, please visit the [website](#) or contact Jessica Owens (owens@nwstraits.org).

Green Crab: Allie shared that staff and Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) have started seasonal trapping for European green crab in Drayton Harbor and Samish Bay. They are working with the Department of Fish and Wildlife to train technicians to trap crabs using NW Straits Commission protocol at Drayton Harbor. The WCC crew was trained to trap in Samish Bay. Department of Fish and Wildlife has caught 32 Green crabs including 2 gravid females. WCC captured 6 green crab including multiple molts, and Taylor Shellfish caught 4 for a total of 10 crabs. They set around 300 traps in Drayton Harbor and 200 in Samish Bay.

Retreat Debrief

Lucas shared some updates and reflections from the retreat. Consultants provided a draft report that will be circulated to the Strategic Planning Committee, and then to the NW Straits Commission. The draft plan contains the mission, vision, purpose, values, strategic goals, objectives, and actions that came out of the retreat. The NW Straits Commission will plan to review the draft at the May NW Straits Commission meeting.

MRC Reports

Clallam MRC – Alan Clark

- The MRC hosted a HAZWOPER refresher and oiled wildlife response training on April 15 and 16.
- The MRC shared an advisory letter with County Commissioners regarding shoreline armoring in the 3 Crabs Rd area.
- Alan Clark gave a presentation to the Sequim Bay Yacht Club on April 9, explaining what the Clallam MRC is and works on.



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Island MRC – Ken Collins

- Camano 101 is one of the MRC's favorite opportunities to connect with the Camano Island community. Volunteers had engaging conversations with attendees and enjoyed the chance to network with other environmental programs at the event.
- The MRC joined the Woodhaven High School class to teach students how to identify local forage fish egg species. The students were incredibly curious and did an excellent job documenting their findings—some even sketched detailed drawings of the different eggs they discovered! The MRC is excited to continue this partnership and inspire more local students to explore and learn about marine science.

Jefferson MRC – Jeff Taylor

- The Olympia oyster restoration team emptied 1,500 bags of Pacific oyster shell at the Discovery Bay Powerline site.
- The Searching for Seaweed Workshop was held on April 4, 16 participants attended.

San Juan MRC – Christina Koons

- The Spring Great Islands Cleanup is scheduled for April – 4/12 on Lopez Island and 4/26 on Orcas, San Juan, and Shaw islands.
- MRC members and staff participated in a North Sound Marine Vegetation Brown Bag Luncheon on April 2 to hear about the latest implementation strategy from the Habitat Leads who use these strategies to guide investments and steer conservation and recovery projects. Learning about different strategies and hearing what projects are happening across the North Sound was inspirational and a great opportunity to collaborate for greater impact.
- Salmon Recovery Site Visits were on April 3 and 4, where MRC members learn in depth about potential salmon recovery projects and act as the Citizens Advisory Group to rank and score projects for the socioeconomic merits.

Skagit MRC – Lynne Wenberg

- **Bowman Bay Beach Seining:** On April 7, Bowman Bay beach seiners caught 831 chum in one day! It exceeded the total annual counts from previous sampling years.
- **Native Oyster Restoration StoryMap:** Now available on the Skagit MRC website homepage: [click here](#)
- **Forage Fish Surveys:** After 13 years of leading the forage fish surveys, project lead Pete Haase officially handed the baton over to Catherine Houck. Pete will continue to be the Skagit MRC's Project Lead while Catherine is learning the ropes.
- **2025 Salish Sea Stewards Graduation Celebration- April 29!** Victor Garcia, one of the new volunteers in the 2025 Salish Sea Stewards Training program and an active forage fish survey volunteer, was recently appointed by the Governor to serve on the Washington



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State Fish and Wildlife Commission for a six-year term. The Commission oversees the fish and wildlife rules and regulations.

Snohomish MRC – Tim Ellis

- The MRC 2024 Annual Report is available on the Snohomish County MRC [website](#).
- The MRC presented their Annual Report to County Council on April 15 and is planning to follow up to the Council with recommendations.

Whatcom MRC – Rick Beauregard

- The MRC will be hosting the first Beach Seine with Kids event on April 22nd with Harmony Elementary School.
- On March 31, staff with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund conducted a reconnaissance survey in Drayton Harbor to identify key habitat features, target species, and assess the general distribution of Olympia oysters at selected sites in Drayton Harbor. The goal of this survey was to inform the MRC about Olympia oyster restoration possibilities within Drayton Harbor.

Commissioner Updates

There were no Commissioner updates.

Public Comment and Partner Updates

There was no public comment.