



WHATCOM MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE
DRAFT SUMMARY

Scheduled for: **February 3, 2022**
Time: **5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.**
Join Zoom Meeting: **Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85730030249>**
Meeting ID: 857 3003 0249
Passcode: 98225
One tap mobile: +1-253-215-8782 US (Tacoma)

<i>We acknowledge the lands we're on today are the ancestral and current homelands of Indigenous Nations who have stewarded them since time immemorial. We respect their sovereignty, support their Treaty rights, their right to self-determination, and we honor their sacred spiritual connection with the land and water. These Indigenous Nations include the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe.</i>		
1.		Introductions and Determine Quorum
2.	5:00	February Agenda Action: Modify and approve agenda as needed. New business can be added if necessary.
3.		Approval of January meeting summary Action: Review and approve summaries as final.
4.		Public Comment Period
5.	5:10	MRC Bull Kelp Survey Update – Julia Ledbetter and Helen Berry, Washington Department of Natural Resources Objective: Inform the MRC about the data collected over the 2021 season as well as related kelp projects in the Salish Sea.
6.	5:40	MRC Project Prioritization Action: Further prioritize projects that would benefit from potential Congressionally Directed Spending.
7.	6:00	MRC Project Updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beach Seine with Schools • Mussel Watch • Remote Beach Cleanups
8.	6:15	MRC Partner Committee Updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WWIN/Speaker Series (Austin) • County Council • Port of Bellingham – Kurt B. • NWSC – Bob C.
9.	6:30	Adjourn

If you're not on our Northwest Straits Commission newsletter list, you can join here: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/join-the-mailing-list/>

Members in attendance: Austin Rose, Alex, Mike MacKay, Eleanor Hines (Chair), Beth Lorence, Paul Troutman, Bob Cecile, Dan Sulak, Colin Wahl, Elma Burnham

Other attendees: Elizabeth Kilanowski, Allie Simpson, John Covert, Julia Ledbetter, Leah Robison, Helen Berry, Mia Somenek, Eric Palmer, Jana Turner, Maggie Taylor

Whatcom County boards, commissions, and advisory committees are currently following State Open Public Meetings Act amended requirements by holding all meetings remotely. Community members who require special assistance to participate in a committee meeting are asked to contact the meeting facilitator at least 4 business days in advance.

- **Introductions and Determine Quorum** – Eleanor began the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and roundtable introductions. A quorum was established.
- **February Agenda**- The February agenda was approved.
- **Approval of January meeting summary**- The January meeting summary was approved.
- **Public Comment Period** – Elizabeth Kilanowski invited participants to the Lummi Island Heritage Trust’s (LIHT) annual meeting on February 12 @ 6:30pm via zoom. More information can be found on the LIHT website. The guest speaker will be presenting on forest gardens.
- **MRC Bull Kelp Survey Update** – Helen Berry, Marine Ecologist, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) specializes in long term monitoring of kelp and began the three-part presentation on bull kelp to the committee. Washington State is a global hot spot for kelp diversity, as it is home to 22 species. A beautiful poster of the [kelps of Puget Sound](#) was shared. Kelp provides critical habitat and primary production (photosynthesizes and produces food) in nearshore environments, which several animals rely on. *Is Washington State losing kelp?* The outer coast and western Strait show stability, though highly variable. Inside the Salish Sea stressors are greater, and major losses have been documented in South and Central Puget Sound. In 2020, a consortium including the Northwest Straits, DNR, and other state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and tribes, worked together and published the [Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan](#). Six broad categories of actions were identified including: 1) understand and reduce kelp stressors, 2) improve understanding of the value of kelp to Puget Sound ecosystems and integrate into management, 3) describe kelp distributions and trends, 4) designate kelp protected areas, 5) restore kelp forests, and 6) promote awareness, engagement, and action from user groups. Most recently, the Puget Sound Partnership revised their [vital signs](#), and added a floating kelp canopy indicator to the vital signs, which is an important recognition of the value of kelp to Puget Sound. The data that the MRC’s collect from their annual surveys will be included in the development of the kelp vital sign. Anyone interested in helping with the development of the kelp vital sign can send an e-mail to nearshore@dnr.wa.gov. Allie Simpson, Northwest Straits Commission, summarized the Whatcom MRC kelp data from four of the five sites monitored annually (Cherry Point, Pt. Whitehorn, SW Lummi Island, and the Aiston Preserve) from 2016-2021. Data can be viewed [here](#). Julia Ledbetter, DNR, explained how the MRC kelp data is being used to develop the floating kelp vital sign. Whatcom survey sites with the most multi-year data, which include SW Lummi and Cherry Pt, were chosen for inclusion to the project. The areas that were consistently surveyed each year were mapped into polygons, which can then be used to extract comparable data. After meeting with all the MRC’s, DNR was able to develop 18 multi-year polygons at 17 sites across the Northwest Straits, with at least 5 years of data. There is a lot of shoreline in Whatcom County where kelp data is not being collected. The MRC was encouraged to expand their monitoring if possible.
- **MRC Project Prioritization** – The MRC prioritized additional projects identified for potential Congressional Directed Spending. Austin will be meeting with Commission staff in late January to share the MRC’s priorities and discuss next steps. The federal budget is operating under a continuing resolution through mid-February, which mean the FY22 funds are delayed.
- **MRC Project Updates:**
 - Beach Seine with Schools** – Mike MacKay is leading a MRC project that provides an opportunity for 4th and 5th grade students in Bellingham and Lummi schools to participate in a 2 hour field event to observe the deployment and catch in a beach seine during the peak of the juvenile salmon outmigration period. Several meeting participants volunteered to help.
 - Mussel Watch** – The mussel monitoring cage retrieval was a success. WDFW reported that from the 75 monitoring sites, only three cages were lost to winter storms. This is a large study across Puget Sound, completed in a short window of time, and is possible due to the over a hundred volunteers and partners that deploy and retrieve over 300 bags of mussels. Data will be shared with lab duties are complete.
 - Remote Beach Cleanups** – The MRC will be hiring a landing craft charter to conduct a beach cleanup along SW Lummi Island. Volunteers will be recruited and there will be coordination with the Lummi Island Heritage Trust. The cleanup is anticipated for July 2022.

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- **MRC Partner Committee Updates:**
WWIN/Speaker Series – Registration is open for the Whatcom Marine Research Symposium, scheduled for February 23, 2022, 9:00-3:15pm, virtual.

County Council – Todd Donovan is the Whatcom County Council representative to the MRC for 2022. No report.

Port of Bellingham – The Port continues to move forward with the Little Squalicum Habitat Beach project. The JARPA has been submitted to the Corps and the HPA has been applied for. The Port will be applying for County permits in the near future.

Northwest Straits Commission – The annual MRC Conference is tentatively scheduled for Nov 18-19 in La Conner. The next virtual symposium on CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS IN THE SALISH SEA is scheduled for February 17, 3:30-5:00pm. This is the final session in the four-part series.

- **Adjourn** – meeting adjourned at 6:45pm.