



WHATCOM MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY
May 2, 2024 5:00pm – 7:00pm
ZOOM [LINK](#)
Meeting ID: 848 5509 7034 | Passcode 280586
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.	5:00	Introductions and Determine Quorum
2.		May 2 Agenda Action: Modify and approve agenda as needed. New business can be added if necessary.
3.		Approval of April Meeting Summary Action: Review and approve summary as final.
4.		Community Updates Objective: Community members attending the meeting who wish to address or update the Committee on Committee related matters will be provided up to five (5) minutes to speak.
5.	5:15	Virtual No-Anchor Zone Update: Dana Oster, Northwest Straits Commission Objective: Dana will update the committee on piloting virtual voluntary no-anchor zones. Action: Gather list of sites in Whatcom to test added select navigation apps.
6.	5:40	Ecosystem Services of Kelp and Eelgrass in Puget Sound: David Trimbach, Ph.D., Conservation Social Scientist, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Objective: Provide opportunity for David to share his research proposal focused on identifying ecosystem services (emphasis on health/wellbeing) of kelp and eelgrass in Puget Sound.
7.	6:00	Northwest Straits 101: Lucas Hart, Director, Northwest Straits Commission Objective: Lucas will share information about the formation of the Northwest Straits Initiative.
8.	6:30	Staff Update: Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead RFP, ESRP 2024 Technical Review Team
98.	6:35	Project Updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kelp • Olympia Oyster • Beach Seine with Kids • Remote Beach Cleanup
109	6:45	MRC Partner Committee Updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Council • Port of Bellingham • City of Bellingham • City of Blaine • Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC)
110	7:00	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/>

Next Meeting: Thursday, June 6, 5:00pm – 7:00pm, ZOOM. Please check out the [MRC calendar](#) for meeting dates and formats.

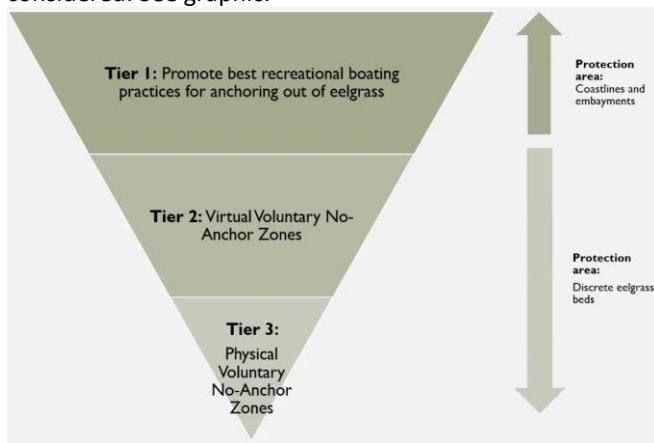
In Attendance: Austin Rose (MRC Staff), Dana Flerchinger (MRC Staff), Heather Spore (Chair), Mike MacKay, Joe Hoats, Rick Beauregard, Andrew Shelton, Dan Sulak, Jace Cotton, Avery Maverick, Jim Boyle, Kalee Galloway, Mary Lou Steward, Kurt Baumgarten, Colin Wahl, Beth Lorence

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Others: Erika Douglas (WCPW), Mark Fairhart, Elizabeth Kilanowski, Dana Oster (NWSC), Maggie Taylor (Nooksack Indian Tribe), Elizabeth Drozda (Skagit MRC), Jeff Whitty (NWSC), Christopher Brown, David Trimbach, Lucas Hart (NWSC, Director)

1. **Introductions and Determine Quorum:** Heather began the meeting with roundtable introductions. A quorum was present.
2. **May 2 Agenda:** The agenda was approved with the additions shown in track changes.
3. **Approval of April Meeting Summary:** The April summary was approved
4. **Community Updates:** No public comment
5. **Virtual No-Anchor Zone (VNAZ) Update:** Dana Oster, Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC), updated the committee on the Voluntary No-Anchor Zone project. Due to the number of new committee members, Dana provided an overview of the project and how it has evolved over the years. The project originated with the Jefferson MRC, in the waterfront of Port Townsend, with a straightforward concept of using informational marker buoys to delineate the deep-water edge of the eelgrass beds and encourage boaters to anchor seaward of the buoys. This is meant to help minimize damage to the eelgrass from anchor scour – which has been observed. In Port Townsend this project is protecting ~50 acres of eelgrass. Volunteer MRC members conduct regular vessel counts to track how effective the buoys are at alternating the behavior of boaters to not anchor in eelgrass. Other MRC's have expressed interest in expanding this project across the region (Salish Sea), but there have been various hurdles (buoy maintenance, permitting, etc). A tiered approach to regional VNAZ is being considered. See graphic.



The most recent iteration to the project is the Tier 2 concept (virtual VNAZs), which the NWSC would like to pilot. Dana is listing partners in Washington and B.C. who are interested in piloting a virtual VNAZ. Chuckanut Bay and Drayton Harbor are sites that have been considered. The Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection District has considered a VNAZ for Drayton, though their concerns go beyond eelgrass and include water quality and impacts to commercial shell fishing. There is hesitancy to implement a VNAZ in Drayton with the hope of reducing long term anchoring/illegal mooring which is an issue in Drayton. The MRC tabled further discussion and decision making until the June MRC meeting.

6. **Ecosystem Services of Kelp and Eelgrass in Puget Sound:** David Trimbach, Conservation Social Scientist, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, is developing a research proposal focused on kelp and eelgrass in response to the recent [HSIL RFP](#). This project will be a social science research project focused on identifying ecosystem services (emphasis on health/wellbeing) of kelp and eelgrass in Puget Sound. The current concept is to create a series of community workshops focused on kelp and eelgrass with three groups in the region: (1) groups involved in restoration and monitoring (including relevant MRCs); (2) Asian American and Pacific Islander harvesters; and (3) general public with no known direct interactions or connections with kelp and eelgrass. The use of workshops have been used before to identify similar linkages and the funding source makes conducting surveys challenging (hence, alternative methods). David is also thinking about conducting an opt-in photovoice component, that would allow participants to take photos and write stories about kelp and eelgrass from around the region (add another more personal narrative to the project). The MRC showed interest in participating as a “general participant” (meaning, the Whatcom MRC would be invited to participate in workshops and other activities, along with other MRCs).
7. **Northwest Straits 101:** Lucas Hart, Director, Northwest Straits Commission provided information about the origins of the [Northwest Straits Initiative](#).
8. **Staff Update:**

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- **Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead RFP-** Staff are applying for the Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead (HSIL) Program request for proposal for investment priority C - New science, synthesis, and analysis for improved protection and restoration of kelp and eelgrass in Puget Sound. This funding opportunity supports activities that address key Puget Sound kelp or eelgrass knowledge gaps needed to advance policy, decision-making, and management.
- **ESRP 2024 Technical Review Team:** The ESRP grant opportunity focuses on protecting and restoring the natural processes that create and sustain the nearshore ecosystem. ESRP invited full applications for 21 projects, and asked if the Whatcom MRC have capacity to participate on the Technical Review Team this year.

9. Project Updates:

- **Kelp:** The kelp monitoring kick off meeting was held at Padilla Bay. The Whatcom survey dates are not finalized yet. Please reach out to Dana if you are interested in helping with the surveys. The NWSC is planning kayak safety courses June 29-30.
- **Olympia Oyster:** The N. Chuckanut Bay survey is scheduled for May 8 with BTC students. Jackie has planned a Drayton Harbor recon for May 23 to check out existing populations.
- **Beach Seine with Kids:** The program is going well this year. May 15 is the last event and volunteers are needed.
- **Remote Beach Cleanup:** The remote beach cleanup will likely not happen this year due to scheduling and boat availability. A grant amendment will be needed.

10. MRC Partner Committee Updates:

- **County Council:** The next Council meeting is May 7. The Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection and Recovery Plan will be discussed. The Surface Water Work Session is scheduled for May 14 and will include a discussion on the Lake Whatcom Watershed. Council is in the process of updating the Lake Whatcom Watershed Management Plan. The Forest Resilience Taskforce is hiring a contractor to help facilitate the development of the Forest Resilience Plan. Ecology has filed the adjudication so the County is in the process of expanding our Superior Court system to accommodate that.
- **Port of Bellingham:** There were remaining funds left in an Ecology grant that the Port is using to treat the stormwater that comes out in front of Mt. Baker plywood at Little Squalicum Beach. They are currently in the design phase.
- **City of Bellingham:** The draft Urban Forestry and Management Plan is on the City Council agenda for May 6.
- **City of Blaine:** There is interest in the eelgrass in Drayton Harbor and damage potentially caused by derelict boats. Though it is likely that the boats are anchored deeper than the eelgrass meadow. Part of Drayton Harbor is managed by the City of Blaine and the other part is managed by the County.
- **NWSC:** No report.

11. Adjourn

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