



WHATCOM MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE
SUMMARY – Project Prioritization Work Session

Scheduled for: February 2, 2023
Time: 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Place: Garden Level Conference Room, Civic Annex Building, 322 N. Commercial St. Bellingham
Join Zoom Meeting: Join Zoom Meeting: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89849275200
Meeting ID: 898 4927 5200
Passcode: 98225
One tap mobile: +1-253-215-8782 US (Tacoma)

Table with 3 columns: Item number, Time, and Description. Includes agenda items like 'Introductions and Determine Quorum', 'February 2 Agenda', 'Approval of January 5 meeting summary', 'Community Updates', 'Current MRC Projects', 'Review of Retreat Materials', 'Whatcom MRC Priorities', 'New Project Ideas', and 'Adjourn'.

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Committee attendance: Heather Spore (Chair), Jim Boyle (Vice Chair), Rick Beauregard, Bob Cecile, Paul Troutman, Elizabeth Lorence, Kaylee Galloway (Whatcom County Council), Colin Wahl, Glen Alexander ("Alex"), Kathy Ketteridge, Mike MacKay, Dan Sulak, Elma Burnham, Jackie Dexter, Andrew Gamble

Others: Sasha Horst (Northwest Straits Commission), Jeff Whitty (Northwest Straits Commission), Joe Hoats, Chris Brown, Julie Hirsh (Garden of the Salish Sea Curriculum), Jana Turner (Garden of the Salish Sea Curriculum), Hunter Lydon

- 1. Introductions and determine quorum: Heather began the meeting with the land acknowledgement and round table introductions. A quorum was present.
2. February 2 agenda: The meeting agenda was approved.

Community members who require special assistance to participate in a committee meeting are to contact MRC Staff at least 4 business days in advance.

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3. **Approval of January 5 meeting summary:** The January 5 meeting summary was approved.
4. **Community Updates:** Alex shared information about the [National Marine Educators Association \(NMEA\)](#) conference being held in Bellingham July 23 – 27. The work of the NMEA aligns with MRC interests and projects. MRC members interested in attending the conference can have registration covered through the MRC grant. There is opportunity for MRC members to lead a field trip, or provide a presentation during a conference session. Alex participates on the conference planning team and asked the committee for approval to attend as a member of the MRC. A motion was made for the committee to approve Alex's participation in the NMEA planning efforts as a representative of the MRC. The motion was seconded and approved by consensus.
5. **Current MRC Projects:** The list of current Whatcom MRC projects was reviewed. The list did not include any projects being funded with the 2023 Congressional Directed Spending.

**Members used the remainder of the meeting to discuss continuing and expanding projects, as well as new project ideas. The work will be funded with the next MRC grant round (October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2025). Projects discussed included:**

- **Bull Kelp Monitoring:** expansion of survey sites, conducting a presence/absence survey via motor boat or aircraft, involving a student intern to help with project expansion.
- **Pilot Olympia Oyster Restoration:** establish additional plots with a harder substrate, purchase of shell to help with larval recruitment and growth. Austin will check with WDFW regarding timing of distributing shell in relation to the timing of potential full-blown restoration efforts. Paul would like to continue with tile monitoring to assess for larvae recruitment.

The Chuckanut PIC project was not included in the detailed meeting packet. Austin will add the project and send to the committee.

- **Voluntary No-Anchor Zone (new project):** a more detailed survey on boat use is needed to consider the Chuckanut Bay location. Austin will follow up with Dana Oster, NWSC, and Lisa Kaufman, NWSF to inquire about the status of the regional project in addition to the needs for assessing Chuckanut Bay. There is interest in investigating Drayton Harbor as a location – not only to protect eelgrass, but water quality – due to an increase of boaters anchoring in that area, and staying for longer periods.
- **Forage Fish Surveys:** The new MRC forage fish intern, Hannah Pittman, is getting on board as a new hire with the County. She will be introduced to the group in the near future. Hannah will be surveying 4 sites along the Squalicum shoreline within the beach nourishment areas of recent restoration projects led by the Port of Bellingham, and the City of Bellingham.
- **Remote Beach Cleanup:** The committee discussed expanding the project to other locations, or host multiple cleanups throughout the year – different locations should be considered. Mainland beach cleanups would be more accessible. Point Roberts would be another option for a remote beach. There is a possibility to coordinate with the Plover. Members could create a database to identify which beaches accumulate debris based on winds.
- **Beach Seine with Kids:** There is a desire to view plankton during the classroom session. The MRC needs to purchase a good display for macro and micro organism viewing. This will also be helpful for outreach events.

A motion was made to move forward with all of the current projects for the 2023-2025 grant round, including project expansions (if possible). The motion was seconded and adopted by consensus.

6. **Review of Retreat Materials:** tabled.
7. **Whatcom MRC Priorities:** tabled.
8. **New Project Ideas:** A concern about MRC capacity to take on new projects was discussed. The MRC is inclusive of local volunteers from partner organizations (North Sounds Stewards) to gain boots of the ground. Creating a master list of volunteers who have expressed interest in particular projects was suggested. New projects discussed included:

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- Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs): Rick Beauregard mentioned this work at the January MRC meeting and is willing to champion. Rick is hoping to institutionalize the project, provide funding stability, increase volunteer participation, and have a forum to share data with the public. This would create the ability to expand the monitoring from Drayton Harbor and Birch Bay to other areas in the county. There is a SoundToxins HABs monitoring training February 21, 12:30pm-4:30pm and the full day annual meeting February 22 8:30am – 4:00pm. [Register HERE](#). SoundToxins (managed by NOAA and WA Sea Grant) includes citizen scientists that monitor for harmful algae in Puget Sound, however, their monitoring does not include northern sites, such as Drayton Harbor. The goal of this work is to fill that data gap considering the commercial oyster farm in Drayton Harbor, current concentration of HABs being found in the area, and the influence of the Fraser River (high nutrient load).

A motion was made to add the HABs monitoring project to the list of MRC projects to be funded through the next grant round. The motion was seconded and approved by consensus.

- Garden of the Salish Sea Curriculum: Julie Hirsch, Garden of the Salish Sea Curriculum (GSSC), gave an overview of the GSSC - a shellfish-based curriculum being implemented in Whatcom County schools (K-12). Julie is looking to expand the GSSC, and continue to offer internships for high school students. Julie proposed that the MRC's adoption of the HABs program be accompanied by outreach and education programs, including the GSSC. Julie will provide a detailed proposal outlining the roles of partner organizations and budget allocations. After reviewing a revised proposal, the MRC will vote via e-mail about including the project in the upcoming MRC grant proposal. Further discussion may be needed at the March MRC meeting.
- Mike MacKay proposed creating a standardized format for providing recommendations for actions that have a high likelihood of causing harm to the Salish Sea and Whatcom County waters. This standardized process would alleviate tight timelines for providing comment, as it would be relevant anytime. Mike also suggested a "hesitation" option for members that did not want to formally support the review and recommendations in the comment letter. Mike will develop a one-pager to share with the committee. Heather suggested this work include a process for communicating the County on comment letters regarding sensitive issues.
- Jackie suggested the MRC consider facilitating eelgrass mapping in Whatcom County to fill apparent data gaps. DNR is currently developing a protocol for this mapping.
- Rick mentioned that Steve Seymour has a proposal to develop a private foundation that would support sustainable maritime business/industry and community education around Blaine Harbor. Rick will ask Steve to present the proposal to the MRC.

**9. Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 7:19pm.