



**WHATCOM MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**July 6, 2023 5:00pm – 7:00pm**  
**ZOOM [LINK](#)**  
**Meeting ID: 898 4927 5200 | Passcode 98225**  
**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.		<b>Introductions and Determine Quorum</b>
2.		<b>July 6 Agenda</b> <b>Action:</b> Modify and approve agenda as needed. New business can be added if necessary.
3.	5:00	<b>Approval of May 4 and June 1 meeting summary</b> <b>Action:</b> Review and approve summaries as final.
4.		<b>Community Updates</b> <b>Objective:</b> 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.
6.	5:10	<b>Staff Update:</b> Annual MRC Conference, CRT Rankings, 2023-2025 budget <b>Objective:</b> Provide staff with opportunity to relay information and updates to the full MRC.
7.	5:20	<b>MRC Retreat Objectives</b> <b>Discussion:</b> Members will discuss their preferred goals and outcomes from the fall retreat, including schedule.
8.	5:50	<b>Project Updates:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wildcat Cove - Peak Sustainability and WWU</li> <li>• What's the Point (Alex)</li> <li>• Olympia oyster</li> <li>• Chuckanut PIC</li> </ul>
9.	6:30	<b>MRC Partner Committee Updates:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WWIN/Speaker Series</li> <li>• County Council</li> <li>• Port of Bellingham</li> <li>• Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC)</li> </ul>
10.	7:00	<b>Adjourn</b>

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/>

**In Attendance:** Austin Rose (staff), Jackie Dexter, Dana Flerchinger (staff), Paul Troutman, Heather Spore, Jim Boyle, Kaylee Galloway, Kurt Baumgarten, Dan Sulak, Mike MacKay

**Others:** Alan Chapman, Maggie Taylor, and Jana Turner (GSSC)

1. **Introductions and Determine Quorum:** Heather Spore began the meeting with the land acknowledgement and introductions.
2. **July 6 Agenda:** The agenda could not be approved (no quorum), though the committee followed the meeting agenda.
3. **Approval of June 1 and May 4 meeting summaries:** The June 1 and May 4 meeting summaries could not be approved.
4. **Community Updates:** Jackie Dexter announced she is running for Whatcom County Council District 5 ([peopleforjackiedexter.com](http://peopleforjackiedexter.com)). Jana Turner shared that many people having been showing up to Beach Naturalist led walks at Birch Bay. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, there were 70 people with 3 naturalists. There is a need for more Beach Stewards at Birch Bay to keep up with the demand. Jana shared that there was lots of trash and firework debris following the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, but there was a major beach cleanup event in Birch Bay on July 5<sup>th</sup> in which volunteers filled 3 dumpsters with 4 tons of trash. Paul Troutman shared news about the proposed Jones Subdivision development in North Chuckanut Bay. The City of Bellingham has issued requests for further information (RFIs) from developers, which, the most recent response, included one significant change of having stormwater discharge into the saltwater marsh on the west end of Chuckanut Bay rather than directly into Chuckanut Bay. There will be a public comment period regarding the development plans. Jackie Dexter mentioned concerns about boats anchoring in Drayton Harbor and Austin mentioned that Dana is monitoring vessels in the harbor weekly in preparation for a potential no anchor zone. Heather Spore mentioned that she saw an unpermitted buoy in North Chuckanut Bay with no information or tag that would potentially within the eelgrass zone. Maggie Taylor with the Nooksack tribe asked about the voluntary no anchor zones that the MRC is discussing, and Austin provided her with information and resources about the developing project.

## 5. Staff Update

- **Annual MRC Conference:** The MRC Conference will be November 3 - 4 at Port Townsend Maritime Center. This will be a great opportunity to learn about region wide projects and opportunities. Member travel and accommodations will be covered under the MRC grant.
- **CRT:** Austin participated in a combined review team of community and technical reviewers to provide local review of salmon recovery projects. They created a ranked list of recommendations, and because more money was allocated this year, all projects were funded. The projects included a South Fork riparian acquisition project by Whatcom Land Trust, Middle Fork Nooksack Creek Reach design 3 and 5 via Lummi Nation, and North Fork Nooksack Below Boulder-Lone Tree Reach design by the Nooksack tribe. Austin can share the proposals and provide additional information for those who want to learn more.
- **2023-2025 NWSC budget:** Due to the recent increase in the cost-of-living adjustment, Austin will need more time to incorporate the changes to the budget and will share in September at the next MRC meeting.

6. **MRC Retreat:** Heather expressed the need for a discussion about the MRC retreat timeline, outcomes, and goals. Dana provided an update about working with Hilary Wilkinson at Triangle Associates who will likely facilitate the retreat, as she has in the past. Hilary recommended having a 3-4 hour retreat for adequate time to cover topics of interest, which include membership roles and responsibilities, the project selection process, why members joined the committee, how to build on membership activity, and individual interest in MRC projects. MRC members voiced support for a longer retreat (3-4) hours as this will provide more time to have meaningful discussions about the topics of interest. Staff will send out a doodle poll of weekend dates to determine member and facilitator availability. The Squalicum boat house was suggested as a retreat location option.

## 7. Project Updates

- **Wildcat Cove:** The MRC has finalized contracts with Peak Sustainability, WWU, and DNR. WWU is hoping to complete the first drone survey in Wildcat Cove on July 14<sup>th</sup> prior to the crabbing season and will be conducting monthly drone surveys through September. MRC staff will have an initial meeting with Peak Sustainability next week to determine the social marketing strategy for eelgrass preservation at Wildcat Cove. The contract with DNR is finalized and their survey will occur in late August along with the survey at Clayton Beach. MRC members are also invited to help with surveys in Clayton Beach occurring on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. Mike McKay inquired about implementing signage in Wildcat Cove letting boaters know not to drive over eelgrass at low tide as he observed similar signage at Odlin County Park in San Juan County. Jana mentioned there is similar signage in Birch Bay at the boat launch requesting that boaters do not launch at low tide to prevent damage to eelgrass beds.
- **What's the Point Event:** Jana shared that they had lots of naturalists at the beach with many people coming down to learn.
- **Olympia Oyster:** There has been MRC member email discussions indicating support for continuation of Olympia Oyster plots in Chuckanut and attempting to establish potential new plots in Drayton Harbor. Heather Spore inquired about the logistics and timeline of establishing test plots in Drayton harbor. Austin mentioned that Brian Allen would be available at the end of the summer and expressed interest in site investigation near California Creek and the inside of Semiahmoo Spit. Paul Troutman discussed the continuation of the ceramic tile placement at 2 sites (most productive sites for Olympia Oysters in the past) in Chuckanut Bay to assess for Olympia Oyster larval recruitment. Dana analyzed the June tiles and no Olympia Oyster larval recruitment was observed. Jackie discussed adding more shell in Chuckanut Bay to encourage more growth. The MRC will need to look into options for purchasing shell as Taylor Shellfish will no longer be donating shells for the project. Heather and Jackie will check in with connections about potential shell sources for the future.
- **Chuckanut PIC:** MRC staff have met with staff from Whatcom County Health and the Whatcom County PIC program about the potential of reopening N. Chuckanut Bay for recreational shellfish harvest. The county will be reaching out to the WA Department of Health (DOH) soon to share current data and discuss options in an attempt to get a conditional opening on the north side of the bay. Currently, only 2 freshwater sites are meeting both health standards and none of the marine sites are meeting both health standards. Lummi and Nooksack tribes have expressed interest in subsistence farming in the North Chuckanut Bay area, which may help make a case to DOH for reopening the area to recreational shellfish harvest. In the meantime, MRC staff need to replace some of the sites based on inaccessibility and are looking into seasonal analysis and the potential for source tracking (using eDNA). County Health also provided a map of known OSS failures/pollution sources that could be impacting water quality and will continue to ensure folks are getting septic systems evaluated. County staff are hoping to meet with DOH in August to reclassify regions of Chuckanut Bay and to determine other information that is needed to do so. WDFW manages harvest regulations and conducts assessments in October/ November, so the County plans to submit an application to change the shellfish regulations in 2024. The County is also looking into how can the Local Management Plan (OSS management plan) can be modified to include Chuckanut as a marine recovery area to bring more regulations to septic system use in this area.

## 8. MRC Partner Committee Update

- **WWIN/Speaker Series:** Whatcom Water Week is set for September 9<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>. If members are available, the MRC can host an event or partner with Re Sources for a beach cleanup. Austin will be sending out emails in August to gauge interest/remind folks.

- **County Council:** On July 11, a public hearing on an ordinance brought to the County by the co-managers regarding banning tubing/floatation devices on South Fork to protect Chinook Salmon. The Whatcom Compound Flood Vulnerability and Risk Assessment was presented to the Climate Action and Natural Resources Committee. Advisement from the MRC would be valuable to this work. The final report will be shared with the committee when available. Austin will reach out to PDS staff to see if a more formal update regarding the Comprehensive Plan could be shared with the MRC. Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) no longer have a deadline to enroll, however, the County is looking to enroll in Fall 23'.

*Heather Spore asked that the MRC be kept in the loop on Whatcom's VSP as there is interest on how the program will be developed and the coordination with the agriculture community in Whatcom County.*

- **Port of Bellingham (POB):** The POB's Climate Action Strategy is wrapping up and will be presented to Port Commissioners soon. The POB is also preparing a Parks (open space) plan, which would allow the Port to apply for certain Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grants. A survey (boater focused) will be sent out to get a sense of how the current open spaces are being used (marina, parks, amenities etc.). Osprey are trying to nest in cranes by the Old Fairhaven shipyard. What can the Port do? In the interim, the tenants have been asked to keep their cranes down when Osprey are seen trying to nest. Port engineers have done some research and are working to build an Osprey nest platform that could be put on a pole in Marine Park. If the platform works, more may be built.
- **Northwest Straits Commission:** Mike MacKay attended the meeting on Lopez Island. The group took a trip to Odlin State Park where San Juan MRC showed a voluntary no-anchor zone to protect a large eelgrass bed.

*Mike mentioned that he received an e-mail from WA Fisheries reporting that 2023 is the first year they have not found herring spawn along Cherry Pt. in 50 years. The Cherry Pt herring stock was the largest in western Washington.*

**9. Adjourn:** Meeting adjourned at 6:29pm

*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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