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| MRC Members Present Natasha Coumou, Chair  Tim Ellis, Co-Vice Chair,  NWSC and LIO Rep  Brie Townsend, Co-Vice Chair  Julie Schlenger  Franchesca Perez  Sara Maxwell  **Absent**  Allan Hicks | **Staff**  Elisa Dawson, SWM Senior Planner and MRC Staff  Joycelyn Blue, SWM Planner and MRC Staff  **MRC Ex-Officio Members**  David Bain, MRC Ex-Officio Member  **Others**  Cory Champagne, MRC alternate  Phil Salditt, Citizen  Richard Strickland, Citizen  Dawn Presler, Snohomish County PUD  Laura Gurley, Port of Everett  Jeff Whitty, Northwest Straits Commission  Jamie Bails, Washington DNR  Tom Doerge, Snohomish County, DCNR |
| **Summary of Decisions**   * The MRC approved the November 2023 meeting summary. * Julie Schlenger was elected as Co-Vice Chair. * Cory Champagne was approved as a formal alternate for Sara Maxwell. | |
| **Upcoming Events**   * Forage fish monitoring January 29th * Starlight Beach Walk February 6th * Mussel cage retrieval February 7th | |

**Welcome and Introductions**

MRC Chair Natasha Coumou opened the Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting at 6:30PM.

Natasha introduced herself and asked for self-introductions of the meeting participants. After introductions, she read the Snohomish County Tribal Acknowledgement.

*“We acknowledge the original inhabitants of this place, the Sah ku mehu* (Sauk-*Suiattle Tribe), the stuləgʷábš (Stillaguamish Tribe), and the sduhubš (Snohomish) Skykomish, Snoqualmie and their successors the Tulalip Tribes. Since time immemorial, they have hunted, fished, gathered on, and taken care of these lands and waters. We respect their sovereignty, their right to self-determination and honor their sacred spiritual connection with the land and water. We will strive to be honest about our past mistakes and bring about a future that includes their people, stories, and voices to form a more just and equitable society.*

*With this tribal acknowledgement, we open our time together by honoring the ancestors whose feet first knew these lands, and whose paddles still know the waters of what we now call Snohomish County.”*

**Approval of MRC Meeting Summary**

Tim Ellis made a motion to approve the November 15, 2023, meeting summary. Franny Perez seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

MRC Annual Elections

The MRC reviewed the current roles. Chair, LIO Representative, NWSC Representative, and Ex-Officio members did not change. Tim Ellis decided to step down as a Co-Vice Chair, and Julie Schlenger was elected as a new Co-Vice Chair. Sara Maxwell had requested a formal alternate in accordance with MRC bylaws, and a formal alternate was voted on for Sara Maxwell. The current MRC roles are now as follows:

Chair: Natasha Coumou

Vice-Chair/Co Vice-Chairs: Brie Townsend and Julie Schlenger

LIO Representative: Tim Ellis

LIO Alternate: Allan Hicks and Julie Schlenger

NWSC Representative: Tim Ellis

NWSC Alternate: Julie Schlenger and Allan Hicks

MRC Ex-Officio Members: David Bain

Formal Alternate: Cory Champagne for Sara Maxwell

Northwest Straits Commission Projects and Strategic Plan Overview

A nationally recognized conservation initiative, the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative brings together scientists and countless community volunteers in seven counties in northwest Washington. The Northwest Straits Initiative's unique and innovative approach combines sound science and ecosystem perspective together with citizen energy and entrepreneurship to improve efforts to save Puget Sound.

The Initiative is overseen by the Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) whose mission is to protect and restore the marine waters, habitats and species of the Northwest Straits region to achieve ecosystem health and sustainable resource use. The Northwest Straits Commission provides funding, training, and support to seven county-based Marine Resources Committees (MRCs). It facilitates regional coordination among the MRCs and connects the MRC work to regional planning processes

Dana Oster, the marine program manager for the NWSC, presented an overview of the NWSC strategic plan and process. She also presented on the structure and mission of NWSC. Projects such as the “speed-dates with a scientist”, forage fish, and voluntary no-anchor zones were highlighted during the presentation.

The MRC discussed the NWSC with Dana and sought advice from their strategic planning process as the MRC will begin their own strategic planning process in 2024. One of the recommendations the MRC would like to incorporate into their strategic plan is having a one-pager strategic plan overview that could easily be share with public officials or the public as a communication material.

**Project Updates and Announcements**

* **LIO –Tim Ellis**
  + No Updates.
* **NWSC – Tim Ellis**
  + NW Straits Commission members Bob Cecile (Whatcom MRC) and Elsa Schwartz (Island MRC) have completed their terms on their respective MRCs and therefore have completed their terms on the NW Straits Commission. We are very grateful for their time serving on the NW Straits Commission and MRCs.
  + Teal Waterstrat and Tyler Porter with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gave an overview of their Coastal Program and examples of projects and collaborative opportunities. Their presentation can be found here.
  + The Northwest Straits Commission’s proposal to the UW Evans School Student Consulting Labs was selected by students for a capstone project. The proposal was created by Commission and Marine Resources Committee staff to create a Community Needs Assessment framework that all MRCs can use. The needs assessment will build on work Island Marine Resources Committee developed to better understand community priorities related to marine resources to inform strategic planning and project prioritization. The first round of the project will be from January - May 2024.
  + The Kelp Plan webpage has been updated. It includes the Kelp Plan status report summary and the five themes that the NW Straits Initiative is encouraging partners and members to focus on in relation to the Kelp Plan.
* **Marine Vegetation – Julie Schlenger**
  + Currently working on contracting to bring the consultant on board.
  + The committee plans to hold a kickoff meeting in February.
* **Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention Update – Julie Schlenger**
  + David Bain attended the San Juan Island workshop about acoustic deterrence for keeping marine mammals away from oil spills.
* **Strategic Planning – Natasha Coumou and Franny Perez**
  + A kick-off meeting was held on Jan 9.
  + Interview questions for the individual interviews with MRC members and staff are in draft. The MRC was asked to give feedback on the revised draft interview questions.
  + The strategic plan from 2011-2016 was in the packet for all members to review prior to their interview.
* **ORCA Partnership Update – Elisa Dawson**
  + The 2024 scope of work has been finalized and includes continuing the collection of data and the review and synthesis of previous data from 2020 – 2023.
* **Forage Fish Monitoring –Joycelyn Blue**
  + December monitoring was completed on Dec 18 and 19
  + January monitoring will occur on Jan 29
  + The meeting with WDFW discussing the results of 2023 forage fish monitoring for all MRCs was this morning.
    - The way WDFW shared the data this time included egg detections from the monitoring completed prior to MRC involvement. Picnic Point has had one detection for both Surf Smelt and Sand Lance in December of 2000 when sampling was done by WDFW.
  + 2023 egg detections: Sand Lance – Jan (Howarth S); Surf Smelt – Oct (Howarth S) and Nov (Howarth S)
    - Samples for Sep – Dec are still being processed and detections of Sand Lance are most likely during this timeframe
  + The subcommittee and those who are interested are meeting on January 30 to discuss if there are any MRC members or partner organizations that would want to take over planning, organizing, and conducting the forage fish monitoring at Howarth Park.
* **Mussel Cage Retrieval – Elisa Dawson**
  + The date chosen for mussel retrieval was February 7. Mussels will be collected by members and then delivered to the county campus the following day for pick up by WDFW.
* **MRC New Member Appointments -Elisa Dawson**
  + In one week, the members will be officially appointed to the MRC. Welcome to our new members: Phil Salditt, Richard Strickland, and Dawn Presler.

**The meeting adjourned at 8:31pm.**