



WHATCOM MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE COMMITTEE
DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY | November 6, 2025 5:00pm – 7:00pm | Virtual

Members in attendance: Mike MacKay, Paul Meyer, Dana Daniels (staff), Rick Beauregard, Austin Rose (staff), Laura Hanna, Beth Lorence, Alexi Guddal, Kathy Ketteridge, Mark Fairhart, Glen “Alex” Alexander, Jackie Dexter, Kaylee Galloway (Whatcom County Council), Colin Wahl, Mary Lou Steward (Mayor, Blaine), Kurt Baumgarten (Port of Bellingham)

Others: Julie Hirsch (Garden of the Salish Sea Curriculum), Lisa Kaufman (Northwest Straits Foundation), Maggie Taylor (staff, Nooksack Indian Tribe), David Mapes, Kim Clarkin, Lori Rubens, Alan Chapman

1. **Introductions and Determine Quorum:** Mark began the meeting with the land acknowledgement and roundtable introductions. A quorum was present.
2. **November 6 agenda:** Agenda was approved, with the County Council update moved to after agenda item #5 due to Kaylee needing to be at another engagement.
3. **Approval of September Meeting Summary and October Meeting Summary:** The September and October meeting summaries were approved.
4. **Community Updates:** Julie Hirsch, Garden of the Salish Sea Curriculum, is looking for volunteers for their Spring programming to join students on beach walks. Julie will send an e-mail with more information.
5. **MERIS Letter of Support:** Rick reminded the committee about a previous presentation given to the MRC on the proposed MERIS (Marine Economic and Research Institute for Sustainability) project in Blaine. The planning team received a grant from the Builders Initiative, a charitable foundation of the Walton family, to do a strategic plan, which was included in the MRC meeting materials. The concept is a hub of five main pillars: marine economy, research and innovation, ecosystem integrity and environmental stewardship, Recreation, culture, education, and workforce development. The vision is to create the campus in the Blaine area, potentially the Blaine Marina. Although this project is proposed to be in Blaine, it is expected to be a regional and even international vision to study the entire Salish Sea ecosystem.

The planning team is acquiring letters of support from organizations, including the MRC, and individuals who may participate in this development. A draft letter of support was provided the meeting packet. A motion was made for the MRC to finalize the letter of support and provide it to Rick. All were in favor. Motion was adopted. Mark will provide electronic signature to finalize the letter.

County Council update: Kaylee announced that there will be two new Council members next year, and encouraged members to learn about them. The County operates on a biennial budget that is approved in even years. This year the county will do a mid-biennium to adjust the budget. That review was released in the third week of October, and the Council has opened a public hearing for the budget. The next opportunity to provide input is December 2 when County will take final action. County approved funding for the facilitation of the Whatcom Local Integrating Organization, which works on Puget Sound recovery and salmon recovery. Whatcom residents have likely received their court notice from the Department of ecology in which they are having to respond in demonstration of their water right. The Council is working to find the best way to support the community through that process and adjusting things like facilities and increasing staff to provide technical assistance. Kaylee thanked the committee for the MRC’s feedback on Chapter 12 (climate) of the Comprehensive Plan update. Laura Hanna was appointed by Council to the MRC. MRC members with terms expiring should be contacted by the Executive’s office soon.



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- 6. Mud Bay Cliffs Continued Discussion:** The MRC became aware of the proposed development *Woods at Viewcrest* from the Protect Mud Bay Cliffs (PMBC) community organization in 2021. A timeline of the MRC's correspondence with the (PMBC) was included in the meeting packet. The MRC has provided a comment letter to the City of Bellingham sharing concerns about the potential impact the development could have on North Chuckanut Bay, and asked that an environmental impact statement (EIS) be prepared to address all of the concerns. The developer was told that an EIS was not needed. *What additional support does the MRC feel is appropriate and possible at this time?* One of the main concerns is the stormwater treatment plan and the flow of contaminants into the bay. The PMBC has appealed the SEPA decision, and will face the hearing examiner in January. Two members of the MRC will be providing testimony at the hearing examiner in January, as concerned community members, not representing the full MRC. Due to the agenda time, this topic was tabled till December.
- 7. Clayton Beach Restoration Update:** Lisa Kaufman, Northwest Straits Foundation, provided an overview of the Clayton Beach restoration work, and the history of the area. The project ultimately ends up being about 9+ acres of beach restoration and backshore restoration. Enhancing climate resilience in this area is a key factor key objective of the project. The restoration team will make sure that they're interpreting cultural and historical uses, as well as overall ecosystem dynamics the area. There will likely be cited in interpretation along the trail to the beach. The team is waiting for a permit from state parks to do some initial vegetation management in the areas that are part of the actual restoration or the construction. The team wants to get that riparian vegetation established early on in the Foundation will be putting out a call for volunteers and community members to start doing some blackberry clipping.
- 8. Oil Spill Response Capacity in Whatcom County:** Item tabled, as the presenter was unavailable.
- 9. MRC Conference Preparation:** A handful of members will be attending the MRC conference, November 7 - 8, in La Conner. There is a breakout session called "Reaching your MRC's Full Potential", and Mark felt it was important that the MRC discuss this topic before the conference. A subcommittee of members met to prepare suggestions and share ideas. 1) the group identified some challenges the MRC has faced over the years, and 2) plan for moving ahead. Part of that will entail interviews with every member of the MRC, in which Mark would like to learn about your experience on the MRC. *Why you joined the MRC? Has it met your expectations? What changes would you like to see?* Meetings will be scheduled in person every other Friday.
- 10. MRC staff updates:** The MRC is a committee that is subject to the Open Public Meetings Act. (OPMA). Each member is required to complete the OPMA training. Staff asked that members complete the training and send a certificate of completion that can be filed. The December MRC meeting is a hybrid meeting, which will include the annual potluck. An email will be sent for folks to sign up what kind of dish they would like to bring.
- 11. MRC Project Updates:**

 - **Overview of 2025-2027 Project List:** Resources on these projects can be found in the MRC Google Drive and the MRC website. Dana has provided an overview document, as well as individual PDFs for each project.

- A meeting participant asked if the MRC was doing the intertidal zone monitoring at Cherry Point. The MRC is not going to continue that project, due to too many questions about how the information is being used and how it's been collected. The MRC has been having discussions about the oil spill response in our region and natural



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resource damage assessments and if there is baseline data to be able to successfully conduct one of those assessments and if there is any role for the MRC and something like that. The MRC is discussing how to take on a

project like that in numerous places on the Whatcom County shoreline.

- A MRC member mentioned the idea of climate change monitoring, and spreading the MRC scope of work to consider climate change and human health.

- **Mussel Watch:** Alex volunteered with WDFW, and set out mussel cages at Clark's Point. The cages will be retrieved in January or February and returns to WDFW and they will analyze the toxins found in the mussels.

11. MRC Partner Committee Updates

- **Port of Bellingham:** No report.
- **City of Blaine:** Mayor Steward mentioned that the report about the outflow from the water purification plant entering the harbor is out for review. City of Blaine Public Works staff will be joining the December MRC meeting to provide a short presentation.
- **Northwest Straits Commission:** No Report.

12. Adjourn