WHATCOM MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY| September 3, 2026 5:00pm – 7:00pm| Virtual

Members in attendance: Dana Daniels (staff), Mark Fairhart, Mike MacKay, Paul Meyer, Paul Cline, Rick Beauregard, Alexi Guddal, Kaylee Galloway, Glen Alexander, Kurt Baumgarten, Beth Lorence, Jackie Dexter.

Others: Jeff Whitty (NWSC), Julie Hirsh, Audrey Taylor, Julie Eastlund, Alan Chapman

1. **Introductions and Determine Quorum:** Mark began the meeting with the land acknowledgement and roundtable introductions. Mark mentioned that MRC member Colin Wahl recently resigned from the committee in a Scientific seat. A quorum was present.

2. **September 3 Agenda:** The September meeting agenda was approved.

3. **Approval of June and August Meeting Summaries:** The June and August meeting summaries were approved.

4. **Community Updates:** No community updates were shared.

5. **MRC Partner Committee Updates**:
    - **County Council:** Councilwoman Kaylee Galloway mentioned that County Council is on their summer break through September 15th. She provided updates on council meeting restructuring, describing that council meeting topics will be divided into the Finance and Administrative Services Committee and Committee of the Whole. She also announced that the County executive recommended budget was released this week.
    - **City Council:** No update
    - **Port of Bellingham:** Kurt mentioned that the Port is gearing up for lots of changes given that 3 new Port commissioners will be starting in the fall. He discussed the Joint Aquatics Resources Permit Application for Whatcom Waterway Phase 2 cleanup, explaining that it will be a multi-year project with limited initial funding of around $40 million out of a total $100+ million project, and noted that a separate cleanup project at Blaine marina has been put on hold due to funding issues. He also discussed an upcoming Fairhaven dock replacement project starting in September or October that will include a hand launch area and ADA-accessible launch float. Mike requested having someone from the Port coming to give a more detailed presentation about the Whatcom Waterway Phase 2 cleanup project. Kurt also mentioned that the Ecology rule making webpage for shoreline program is currently open for public comment. Rick discussed the Port of Bellingham's Westman site remediation, expressing disappointment about the loss of funding and asking Kurt if the MRC could provide support for future priority calculations. Kurt agreed to inquire with the site manager about potential assistance that the MRC could provide in the future.
    - **City of Blaine: No Update**
    - **Northwest Straits Commission:** The Northwest Straits Commission update included information about DNR's proposal to change mooring buoy statutes and the approval of the commission's meeting schedule for 2027, including an upcoming in-person meeting in Whatcom County on January 29th. The group also discussed the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative Reauthorization Bill, which has passed Congress and is awaiting Senate approval. There was also a reminder about the NWS Conference that is scheduled for November 6th and 7th.

6. **Bull Kelp Monitoring Project Presentation:** Jeff Whitty, the Bull Kelp Project Manager with the Northwest Straits Commission, provided an overview of the NWSC's kelp monitoring project, outlining the importance of kelp, monitoring efforts, and conservation actions.

7. **MRC Project Updates:**
    a. *Wildcat Cove Eelgrass Protection:* Mike discussed a recent meeting with the project team, MRC interns, and WA State Parks to discuss seasonal signage and floating lane ideas to address eelgrass destruction at the Wildcat Cove boat launch in Larrabee State Park. At the meeting with State Parks, the interns presented an overview of their work this summer and provided recommendations for limiting damage to the eelgrass beds at the launch. State Parks agreed to continue working with the MRC on this issue, and is already working on implementing tide charts as an immediate solution.
    b. *Harmful Algal Bloom Sampling:* Rick introduced three new HAB interns including Brooke Hendrickson from WWU, Alyse Quin from USC, and Mielle Andruscavage from Blaine High School. He also reported on a recent sampling event and project overview with 11 participants from Whatcom County's Natural Resources Division on September 1st.
    c. *Kelp Monitoring:* Dana mentioned that the kelp data has not been processed yet, but volunteers have noted that the bed sizes look comparable to last year. The last survey scheduled for Point Whitehorn had to be cancelled due to wind.
    d. *Forage Fish Monitoring:* Dana mentioned that the next forage fish surveys will take place at Clayton Beach on 9/22 from 9-10:30am and at Little Squalicum Beach on September 24th from 9-12pm.
    e. *Olympia Oyster Restoration:* Jackie presented an overview of the Olympia oyster restoration project efforts from 2026, highlighting successful deployments in both Drayton Harbor and North Chuckanut Bay. Over 35 total volunteers and many important project partners distributed 150 bags of Olympia oyster spat set on Pacific oyster shell at 6 test plots in Drayton Harbor and 200 bags across 3 sites in North Chuckanut Bay. Next summer, the MRC and volunteers will return to these plots to conduct the first Olympia oyster population assessment. Jackie will also be presenting an overview of this work at the International Conference on Shellfish Restoration in Shelton, WA in early October.
8. **MRC Subcommittee Updates:**
    a. *Education and outreach:* Alexi presented the MRC's new logo and branding guidelines that were introduced at the August MRC meeting, and the committee formally voted to adopt them. Alexi also mentioned a few upcoming outreach events including a stream walk at Little Squalicum Beach and Bellingham SeaFeast, where the MRC will be trialing a new salmon and orca themed education and outreach lesson plan.
    b. *Policy/Advisory:* Dana mentioned that the subcommittee is working to put together a tool to help the group better assess advisory topics as they arise to determine if/ how the MRC should respond.
    c. *Executive*: Mark reminded the group about the October planning meeting that will be taking the place of the regularly scheduled MRC monthly meeting and encouraged in person attendance. He also mentioned that the executive committee will be sending out a message to prep folks for a discussion on priorities of the MRC.

9. **Proposed Firework Ordinance Discussion:** The committee discussed a proposed firework ordinance that Councilwoman Galloway requested feedback on from the group. The group discussed environmental and marine impacts, focusing on water quality effects in Birch Bay. The group agreed to provide a formal response on the ordinance after their October meeting.

10. **Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 7pm. The next meeting is scheduled for October 1st, and it will be hybrid.