



MRC Members

Glen Alexander (“Alex”)
Citizen-at-Large
Term 2: 01/21/2027

Rick Beauregard (Vice-Chair)
Scientific
Term 1: 01/31/2027

Jim Boyle
Conservation/Environmental
Term 1: 01/31/2026

Jace Cotton
City of Bellingham, Council

Jackie Dexter
Economic
Term 1: 01/31/2027

Mark Fairhart
Citizen-at-large
pending

Kaylee Galloway
Designated, County Council

Joe Hoats
Economic
Term 1: 01/31/2028

Kathy Ketteridge
Citizen-at-Large
Term 1: 01/31/2026

Elizabeth Lorence
Conservation/Environmental
Term 1: 01/31/2026

Mike MacKay
Scientific
Term 2: 01/31/2028

Avery Maverick
Recreational
Term 1: 01/31/2028

Andrew Shelton
Economic
Term 1: 01/31/2028

Heather Spore (Chair)
Scientific
Term 1: 01/31/2025

Mary Lou Steward
City of Blaine, Mayor

Dan Sulak
Recreational
Term 1: 01/31/2026

Colin Wahl
Conservation/Environmental
Term 1: 01/31/2025

WHATCOM MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE
DRAFT MEETING AGENDA | June 6, 2024 5:00pm – 7:00pm
ZOOM [LINK](#), Meeting ID: 848 5509 7034 | Passcode 280586
1-253-215-8782 US (Tacoma)

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.

1.		Introductions and Determine Quorum
2.		June 6 Agenda Action: Modify and approve agenda as needed. New business can be added if necessary.
3.	5:00	Approval of May Meeting Summary Action: Review and approve summary as final.
4.		Community Updates Objective: 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.
5.	5:15	Drayton Harbor Shellfish Recovery and Protection Plan Rick Beauregard and George Kaas, Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection District (DHSPD) – <i>Brief Sheet #5</i> Objective: Discuss plan and components that overlap with MRC interest
6.	5:45	Cherry Point Intertidal Monitoring: Brigid Wills, RE Sources – <i>Brief Sheet #6</i> Objective: Discuss the possibility of the MRC taking on the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Intertidal Monitoring
7.	6:15	Staff Updates: VNAZ Drayton Harbor, HSIL application, MRC grant amendment Objective: Provide staff with opportunity to relay information and updates to the full MRC. Action: Determine MRC would like to pilot a virtual VNAZ in Drayton Harbor in partnership with the DHSPD.
8.	6:35	Project Updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kelp • Olympia Oyster • HABS • Wildcat Cove Social Marketing • Beach Seine with Kids
9.	6:45	MRC Partner Committee Updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Council • Port of Bellingham • City of Bellingham • City of Blaine • Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC)
10.	7:00	Adjourn

Next Meeting: Thursday, August 1st, 5:00pm – 7:00pm, [ZOOM](#). **(NO JULY Meeting!)** Please check out the [MRC calendar](#) for meeting dates and formats.

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In attendance: Austin Rose (MRC staff), Dana Flerchinger (MRC staff), Rick Beauregard, Glen Alexander “Alex”, Jackie Dexter, Avery Maverick, Jim Boyle, Kaylee Galloway, Elizabeth Lorence, Mark Fairhart, Heather Spore, Andrew Shelton

Others: George Kaas (DHSPD), Julie Hirsch, Kim Clarkin, Andrea Doyle (ALARE) AltaGas, Erica Bleke (DNR), Brigid Wills, Alan Chapman, Katherine Garrah, Eleanor Hines, Leah Skare (NWSC), John Bremer, Dylan Trainer (NWSF Intern)

1. Introductions and Determine Quorum: Rick Beauregard (Vice-Chair) began the meeting with roundtable introductions. A quorum was present.

2. June 6 Agenda: The agenda was approved with additions shown in track changes.

3. Approval of May Meeting Summary: The April summary was approved.

4. Community Updates: No community updates were shared.

5. Drayton Harbor Shellfish Recovery and Protection Plan: Rick Beauregard presented a history of the Shellfish Protection District (SPD), the 2024 Drayton Harbor Shellfish Recovery and Protection Plan (DHSRPP) update that was recently adopted by County Council on May 7th, 2024, and identified potential areas of collaboration and overlap with the Whatcom MRC. There have been tremendous improvements to Drayton Harbor water quality since 1995, especially due to the updated water reclamation facility, updates to sewer and stormwater infrastructure, establishment of agricultural best practices, the OSS monitoring and mitigation program, and community involvement. Despite this progress, it will still require much effort to improve water quality in the face of growing populations in Whatcom County. Population growth, climate change, sea level rise, and inadequate and aging infrastructure all pose threats to the water quality in Drayton Harbor. The DHSRPP also summarized recommendations for 2024. Potential areas of collaboration/overlap with the Whatcom MRC include: Combining individual shellfish protection districts (including North Chuckanut Bay and addressing Olympia Oyster restoration), expanding opportunities for community science and partnerships (Increased collaboration between DHSPC and the MRC to improve efforts), exploring options to reduce the shellfish harvesting closure zone around the Lighthouse Point Water Reclamation Facility outfall on the outside of Semiahmoo Spit (an important shellfish harvesting area for commercial, recreational, and tribal purposes; collaboration with the MRC to conduct water quality sampling, to conduct dilution monitoring, utilize circulation models, determine the value to the resources in this area, etc), researching and evaluating options for a voluntary no anchor zone in portions of Drayton Harbor adjacent to shellfish growing areas, monitoring and reporting illegal anchoring in Drayton Harbor (preventing derelict vessel impacts to shellfish beds), preserving and conserving eelgrass meadows in Drayton Harbor, collaborating with and continuing community outreach and education to protect shared natural and water resources. Rick is looking to identify other members of the MRC that are interested in pursuing these avenues of collaboration with the DHSPD (especially around the topics of derelict boats, eelgrass, and the Lighthouse Point Reclamation Facility). In the chat, Katherine Garrah also mentioned that she thinks a more dedicated working group collaboration with the MRC would be ideal to evaluate and prioritize DH’s goals that align with MRC’s and to get everyone up to speed with the history of aligned efforts on either side. This would be ideal to keep people’s efforts / contributions more focused and effective.

6. Cherry Point Intertidal Monitoring: Brigid Wills and Eleanor Hines provided a history of intertidal monitoring at the aquatic reserves, and inquired about having the MRC take on these surveys at the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve as RE Sources no longer has the capacity to organize and conduct these surveys. Monitoring started and has continued for many reasons including filling valuable data gaps that other agencies/organizations aren’t able to collect, informing DNR’s management plan with species lists and changes in beach profiles over time, and increasing community awareness and engagement about the aquatic environment. Whatcom County has 4 sites, with 2 sites surveyed per year. This program depends on volunteer lead naturalists who are able to identify down to the species level (In the past an honorarium of \$100 per naturalist per site has been provided, typically 2-3 lead naturalists needed per site), community volunteers to assist with the surveys, and staff time to organize the event, coordinate volunteers, conduct

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surveys, and log data (estimated 40 hours per year). Gear has already been purchased and there are minimal costs associated with year to year maintenance/new supplies. **Action:** Alex and Mark volunteered to explore this proposal further to assess the MRC's capacity to take on this project.

7. Staff Updates:

- **VNAZ Drayton Harbor:** Austin revisited the conversation from the May MRC meeting about the voluntary no anchor zone in Drayton Harbor. The MRC is not going to pursue the voluntary no anchor zone in Drayton Harbor at this time. Rick expressed the need for the key issues to be properly identified in this region before moving forward.
- **HSIL Application:** Austin and county staff recently applied for this grant opportunity. The Puget Sound Submerged Vegetation Monitoring Program reported insufficient eelgrass data to determine trends at a majority of sites throughout Whatcom County. Through this project, Whatcom County will work with local organizations to synthesize existing data, prioritize areas with limited information, and collect and share data to inform land use planning, protection and restoration projects, and climate action and resilience planning. This project will include:
 - Compiling existing local data into a geodatabase that is compatible with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) geodatabase and creating templates and protocols for incorporating future local data.
 - Completing a data gap analysis to determine areas with limited spatial and temporal eelgrass information.
 - Hosting a facilitated work group of local and state partners to review data gaps and program goals, and to identify priority areas for detailed surveys. Completing up to 5 eelgrass surveys in prioritized areas.
 - Posting data to the Whatcom County Watershed Data Portal and Viewer to provide user-friendly access to organizations and community members. Data will be used to guide planning, protection, restoration, and climate action programs.
- **MRC grant amendment:** Austin will be submitting a grant amendment to move funds for the Remote Beach Cleanup to 2025 since logistics did not work out for the event to happen this year. Austin inquired about any other changes to the grant for other projects based on the current status and requested project leads let her know about any delays and necessary changes.

8. Project Updates:

- **Kelp:** Dana shared the 2024 kelp survey dates that have been scheduled.
 - Aiston Preserve: Sunday, July 21st, Backup date: Wednesday, July 24th
 - Cherry Point Gulf Road: First outing: Sunday, August 4th, Backup date: Tuesday, August 6th, 2nd Outing: Sunday, September 1st
 - Point Whitehorn: Tuesday, August 20th, Backup date: Wednesday, August 21st
- **Olympia Oyster:**
 - North Chuckanut Bay: In partnership with BTC, The MRC completed the annual Olympia Oyster population survey in North Chuckanut Bay on May 8th. Live oysters were found at 3 of the plots including Oly 2, Oly 3, and Oly 7. Since Oly 7 has been the most productive site, the MRC and BTW students also added 25 cubic feet of Pacific oyster shell to improve the substrate for Olympia oyster larval settlement at this site. During the Olympia Oyster survey, 2 WDFW technicians also conducted an invasive oyster drill survey, and did not find any within North Chuckanut Bay.
 - Drayton Harbor: Jackie and Dana conducted a preliminary survey in Drayton Harbor to assess the Puget Sound Restoration Fund's existing Olympia oyster restoration site from 2014-2019. They observed an area of 8000m² in which healthy, adult Olympia oysters were found with new shell growth. However, no new recruitment was observed in this region. Jackie Dexter shared that circulation models would be helpful to determine where the larvae are being transported/settling. Austin expressed interest in meeting with Brian Allen and Ryan Crimm to look at aerial photos of the harbor to assess whether their

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recommendations for Oly plots near Semiahmoo spit or the tidewaters of California Creek are still supported. Jackie expressed concern with the California Creek location due to fecal coliform bacteria counts in that area. Jackie also mentioned meeting with her hatchery manager to determine the possibility of partnering with PSRF to create a northern brood stock program with the large adult Olympia oysters found in Drayton Harbor.

- **HABs:** Rick shared the HABs update, stating that the spring plankton blooms have begun. The blooms of organisms producing paralytic shellfish toxins (PST) started slightly later than last year, but Whatcom County is now closed due to these biotoxins. Since spring, Whatcom County has been the only site in the Puget Sound with Alexandrium (PST producing species) and with biotoxins detected in mussels tested by the Department of Health. Rick also mentioned the recent oyster biotoxin outbreak in Oregon that made at least 20 people sick, and emphasized that this HABs projects exists so we are able to prevent these events and protect public health in our region.
- **Wildcat Cove Social Marketing:** Dana shared that the Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) hired 2 interns, Dylan Trainer and Alex Haase, to help with various MRC and NWSF projects this summer. One of the projects the interns will assist with is engaging with boaters at Wildcat Cove to encourage best practices to prevent damage to the eelgrass beds. The MRC and NWSF will conduct a training session with the interns at the Cove the week of June 17th.
- **Beach Seine with Kids:** The Beach Seine with Kids Program wrapped up for the year with Eagleridge on May 15th. The MRC also conducted a follow-up meeting to review the program and brainstorm way to improve the program in the future.

9. MRC Partner Committee Updates:

- **County Council:** Councilwoman Galloway shared a few updates from the council regarding the Comprehensive Plan update. Council received a presentation from the Planning and Development Committee about population growth projections and have been discussing a plan for public participation in this planning process. Councilwoman Galloway encouraged the MRC's continued involvement and feedback throughout this process. Also, the Council officially received the budget memo from the executive; The county is beginning the multi-month process of putting together the 2025-2026 biennial budget. As such, Council has been working to establish their own priorities.
- **Port of Bellingham:** No update
- **City of Bellingham:** No update
- **City of Blaine:** No update
- **Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC):** Report was sent via email.

10. Adjourn

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