

WHATCOM COUNTY
MARINE RESOURCE COMMITTEE
PROCESS AND PROCEDURAL AGREEMENT *Update*
(See italics for updated items.)

1. Introduction

This Process and Procedural Agreement contains the consensus of the Whatcom County Marine Resource Committee (“WCMRC”). It describes the process structure and procedural ground rules, which will govern the participants’ involvement. Participants are engaged in the process by choice, at the invitation of Whatcom County Government.

2. Procedural Purpose

The purpose of the WCMRC is as stated in the Murray-Metcalf Northwest Straits Citizens Advisory Commission Report to the Convenors, a copy of which is attached hereto as Schedule A, and by this reference is incorporated herein. Further guidance is as provided by the Northwest Straits Commission (the “NWSC”) and is attached hereto as Schedule B (“NWSC Benchmarks”) and incorporated herein.

3. Participants, Membership and Meeting Participation

In alignment with Whatcom County resolution no. 99-047 ([download 1999 Whatcom County resolution no. 99-047 \[pdf\]](#)) The WCMRC is comprised of individuals who represent the following organizations or interest groups or who provide the following knowledge base:

- Tribal representatives (2);
- Local government elected-officials (3);
- Scientific experts in relevant fields (3);
- Affected economic interests (3);
- Affected recreational interests (2);
- Conservation and environmental interests (3);
- Citizens at large (3).

(a) Voting Alternates. The WCMRC will recognize appropriately designated alternates in the event of a representative’s prolonged absence. MRC members are encouraged to actively communicate anticipated prolonged absences so that an alternative can be identified. Designated alternates having voting authority must be appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by County Council by majority vote. Alternates must represent the same interests as the individual they replace. WCMRC members still retain their voting rights even if a voting alternate is appointed. The member and voting alternate may not both vote on any one issue.

(b) Non-Voting Alternates. At the discretion of each MRC member, an informational alternate can be assigned for the flow of information between the member, member’s organization or interest group, and the WCMRC. Non-voting alternates may not vote, nor may they participate in consensus decision-making.

(c) Ex-Officios. Ex-Officio members can represent Planning and/or Public Works staff of the County, Blaine, Bellingham, or the Port of Bellingham. Additional Ex-Officio members can be appointed as necessary. The Ex-Officio seats are not filled by voting members, and are not considered part of the quorum. Ex-Officio's are meant to provide information to the committee, and thus, inform a vote.

(d) Written Comment. Written comment sent in lieu of an alternate's presence will be noted by the committee chair (the "Chair") when the topic it addresses comes up on the agenda. Written comment must be submitted to the Chair and/or Lead Staff prior to the meeting at which the topic is to be discussed. Written comment may be emailed. Written comment will be no more than 100 words and will clearly identify the agenda topic, which it addresses. Written comment will be considered during the discussion and consensus process, but the member forfeits the right to participate in the final consensus decision or vote when absent.

(e) Meeting Attendance. Members or voting alternates are expected to attend all WCMRC meetings. If a member or voting alternate is unable to attend a meeting, the member shall notify the Chair or Lead Staff. If a member misses two consecutive meetings without having notified the Chair or Lead Staff, the member will be contacted. If a member misses three or more consecutive meetings without having notified the Chair or Lead Staff, the member will be contacted regarding strategies for participation, alternate designation, or resignation. If a member misses 50% of the meetings within a twelve-month period without having notified the Chair or Lead Staff, the member will be contacted regarding strategies for participation, alternate designation, or resignation. If a member has prolonged absences even if he/she has notified the Chair or Lead Staff, the designation of a voting alternate will be encouraged pursuant to the procedure outlined in Section 3a of this agreement.

4. Decision-Making Approach

(a) Definition of Consensus. Decision making approach will be by consensus. Consensus means that all parties involved in decision-making share a sense that they have reached a common resolution. Consensus for the table will be seen as an agreement that all participants in the decision-making process "are willing to live with" or "have no opposition." Every member or voting alternate in attendance will be given an opportunity to voice his or her decision.

Consensus is reached when the participants agree on a package of provisions that address the entire range of issues. It is essential that each participant support the overall agreement. The participants may not agree with all aspects of an agreement, but they do not disagree enough to warrant their opposition to the overall package. Each participant agrees to be committed to the process and to participate in good faith. Acting in good faith means remaining honest throughout the process and contributing to the development of an outcome that accommodates the interests of all.

If, having negotiated in good faith, the participants find that they can reach agreement on a significant majority of the issues, but cannot agree on a limited number of issues, they may "agree to disagree" on those issues. They should describe clearly the areas of disagreements. They may indicate that further investigation is necessary on one or more of the unsettled issues. They may suggest that one or more of the unsettled issues be referred to some other decision-making process.

With respect to the issues on which a member or voting alternate withholds agreement, that

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member or voting alternate is responsible for explaining how his/her interests are adversely affected or how the proposed agreement fails to meet his/her interests. The member or voting alternate withholding agreement must propose alternatives and other members must consider how all interests may be met.

(b) Alternatives to Consensus. If full consensus is not reached all members or voting alternates will address dissenting voices by fully exploring the issues and interests they have raised that directly relate to the decision. If consensus cannot be reached, the Chair will call a special meeting prior to the next scheduled meeting or the Chair will table the decision until the next meeting. If, at the next special or scheduled meeting, consensus cannot be reached, the group will recognize simple majority vote. Dissenting opinions will be recorded and included in the meeting summary.

(c) Roll Call. At the request of a member, voting alternate, or the Chair, roll can be called for positions when needed.

(d) Quorum. Decisions will be made by those who are at the table. Absent members or voting alternates will not block the progress of the group in reaching decisions. The representatives or alternates present will constitute a quorum. The presence of 8 voting members or voting alternates is considered a quorum. The existence of quorum is determined at the beginning of the meeting. In the event members or voting alternates leave during the established time period of the meeting, reducing the number of members to fewer than 8, the quorum requirement is still met.

(e) Revisiting Decisions. Decisions made at previous meetings may be reopened for discussion only upon agreement of the members or voting alternates at the current meeting by using the decision-making approach defined above or by a motion from the Chair.

(f) Timeline for Decision-Making. Decisions will be made at the meeting following the one at which a topic was discussed. This allows members to consider the topic and become more informed if necessary. Exceptions to the one-month delay in decision-making described above are: (1) when a subcommittee, which has been charged with a task by the WCMRC, makes a recommendation; or (2) when the WCMRC directs staff to assume a work task. In these two situations the WCMRC may make a decision at the same meeting at which the item is introduced and discussed. The WCMRC may, by consensus, agree to eliminate the one-month delay in decision-making on a case-by-case basis. If there is a consensus that a decision can be made at the same meeting at which the discussion item has been introduced, the WCMRC may do so.

(g) Decision Process for Supporting Grant Proposals. There are two processes for responding to a request for a letter of support for grant proposals:

a. For requests to provide a letter of support for a project in which the WCMRC has previously discussed and agreed to take an active role or partnership, the question of a letter of support can be decided at the first meeting after a letter of support has been requested, and a draft support letter has been provided to the committee for a decision.

b. For requests to provide a letter of support for a project that would advance WCMRC goals and objectives as outlined in the current WCMRC Strategic Plan, the request for a letter of support must be received at least one week before a WCMRC meeting with the draft grant application and draft support letter for the committee to review. The summary of the discussion, draft grant application and the draft support letter will be sent to all WCMRC members. A final decision to

provide a letter of support can be made if no committee member objects within 72 hours after the email summary was distributed.

5. Meeting Protocol

(a) Meeting Format. Monthly MRC meetings will be held remotely unless determined by the Committee a hybrid meeting should be held. Remote meetings will be held via Zoom, with login information clearly displayed at the top of meeting agendas as well as on the MRC website.

(b) Meeting Communication. In the spirit of collaboration, participants will attempt to identify solutions that meet the interests of all. They will seek to:

- Clearly and concisely articulate their own interests;
- Respect the legitimacy of the interests of other participants;
- Make an effort to educate themselves about the issues and interests involved;
- Listen to, and hear what each participant is saying;
- Refrain from personal attacks or accusations;
- Take responsibility for assuring each member's interests are met.

c) Accommodations for Hybrid and Online Meetings

To support effective participation in hybrid or online meeting formats, the WCMRC will implement the following updates to meeting communication. These updates will be applied at the sole discretion of the Chair, as deemed appropriate:

Zoom Platform Updates

- *The Zoom chat transcript will be saved and included with the meeting Agenda and Summary Notes (see Section 5c).*
- *The Chair or meeting facilitator will read aloud chat comments during the meeting to ensure accessibility for those joining by phone or attending in person during hybrid meetings.*
- *The following Zoom features will be used whenever possible to support meeting engagement:*
 - *All participants are encouraged to stay muted when not speaking to maintain focus and minimize distractions.*
 - *Participants should use the "Raise Hand" feature to request to speak.*
 - *The Chair or facilitator will manage the speaker queue, balancing requests from both in-person and virtual attendees.*

Voting Procedures for Hybrid and Online Meetings

- All votes will be conducted by roll call, led by the Chair.
- Voting options include:
 - "Definitive Yay"
 - "Yay with Hesitation" — members selecting this option will be asked to briefly explain their reservations for the record.
 - "Definitive Nay"
- Verbal voting is encouraged to provide space for explanation. Alternatively, members may submit brief comments in the Zoom chat, which the Chair will read aloud.

- In the case of an “agree to disagree” consensus, members are requested to clearly articulate areas of disagreement for inclusion in the official record.

(d) Meeting Frequency. The WCMRC will meet monthly on the 1st Thursday, from 5:00 p.m. to 7 p.m. At the discretion of the MRC members, additional meetings may be called provided there is consensus among MRC members or voting alternates.

(e) Agendas and Summary Notes. Proposed agenda items must be submitted to the Chair or Lead Staff two weeks prior to the next scheduled meeting. Meeting agendas will be distributed to MRC members one week prior to the scheduled meeting. Presentation, discussion, and decision items will be clearly identified. The decision-making process occurs as described in 4(f) above. The agenda will be posted to the web site prior to each meeting.

Meeting activities will be captured in a meeting summary. This summary will be distributed to MRC members prior to the next scheduled meeting. Meeting summaries will include a brief summary of each agenda item with action items identified. Summaries are not intended to be verbatim but rather synopses of major issues that arose during the meeting. Audio transcripts are discretionary.

(f) Meeting Process. The MRC meetings will proceed in the following manner:

- Establish quorum.
- Review and approve agenda.
- *Community Updates*
- Presentation, discussion, decision, and standing agenda items.
- New business.
- Action item review.

(g) Visitors and Community Updates. Meetings are open to the public. Public engagement is a vital component of MRC meetings as they provide an opportunity for MRC members to connect with the community about marine issues or topics. Time will be provided for informational updates from meeting visitors or committee members at each regularly scheduled meeting. Introductions and Community Updates shall be at the beginning of the meeting. Each speaker shall have approximately three (3) minutes at the discretion of the committee members. The MRC may also call on individuals to give information as needed and requested by MRC members.

Suggestions for future speakers shall be forwarded to the Chair or Lead Staff to pursue and schedule. Invitations and scheduling of guest speakers for the meetings will also be handled through the Chair and Lead Staff.

(h) Forms of Public Comment. Meeting visitors who wish to provide a formal public comment on an issue/item not listed on the meeting agenda, but related to MRC business have two primary methods:

1. Written: Persons may submit, in advance of or at a MRC meeting, written comments for the Committee. Comments may be submitted by courier mail, electronic mail, or presented in-person at a monthly Committee meeting. Written comments submitted should be addressed to the Whatcom Marine Resources Committee and should contain contact information of the

commenter. Submitting a written comment does not eliminate an individual's opportunity to address the Committee in-person at the meeting. However, it may be used as an effective means to convey complex information when presenting an overview in person.

2. In-person: Persons who wish to address the Committee in-person at a monthly Committee meeting are welcome to do so during a designated public comment period. Commenters will contact MRC Staff or Chair two weeks prior to the meeting in order for the meeting agenda to include a public comment period. In this instance, the Committee will prepare to adhere to the Open Public Meeting Act and offer a physical location for the meeting to be held while also allowing remote attendance.

(i) Subcommittees. At the discretion of the MRC, subcommittees may be formed to address items outside regularly scheduled meetings. Subcommittee volunteers will be expected to actively contribute to work products. Each MRC subcommittee will give a brief summary of activities at each regularly scheduled meeting. Public participation in subcommittees is welcome.

7. Conflict of interest

In order to avoid a member obtaining an unfair competitive advantage, MRC members or voting alternates may not be involved in decision-making or development of detailed project scopes of work that may result in financial gain. It is the responsibility of the member or voting alternate to identify such conflict. The MRC reserves the right to reject proposals from members or voting alternates who may have a conflict of interest.

Member Roles and Responsibilities

Chair

- Serves as the primary representative and official spokesman for the Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee (MRC).
- Attends monthly Executive Committee meeting with the Whatcom MRC Coordinator(s) to organize and prepare the monthly meeting agendas and to discuss general MRC business, including: scheduling guest speakers, coordinating with Project Leads to provide updates on the status of their specific projects, member applicants, and public presentations.
- Chairs the monthly MRC meetings.

Vice Chair

- Serves as the alternate for the Chair, assuming all necessary responsibilities when the Chair is unavailable or if there is a conflict of interest.
- Supports the Chair and Whatcom MRC Coordinator(s) as needed.
- Attends monthly Executive Committee meeting with the Whatcom MRC Coordinator(s) to organize and prepare the monthly meeting agendas and to discuss general MRC business, including: scheduling guest speakers, coordinating with Project Leads to provide updates on the status of their specific projects, member applicants, and public presentations.

Project Lead

- Assists with developing scope of work, planning, managing, and completing project within appropriate timeline.
- Delegates tasks to at least two committee members assigned to the project.
- Assists MRC staff with organizing and coordinating community volunteers for the project, if necessary.
- Assists MRC staff with completing necessary reporting requirements for grants associated with the project
- Responsible for updating the Whatcom MRC on the project status.

NWSC Representative

- Attends the NWSC meetings to update the Commission on the progress of Whatcom MRC activities and projects.
- Reports back to the MRC Members at the monthly meetings on the topics discussed at the latest NWSC meeting.
- Represents and votes for Whatcom MRC on issues discussed at NWSC meetings.

NWSC Alternate

- Serves as the alternate for the NWSC Representative, assuming all necessary responsibilities, when the NWSC Representative cannot attend the regular NWSC meetings.
- Supports the NWSC Representative as needed.

MRC Member

- Actively participates, if possible and willing, in one or more of the following roles:
- Runs for defined MRC roles such as the Chair, Vice-Chair, NWSC; Representative or NWSC Alternate;
- Attends monthly MRC meetings; If a member misses 50% of the meetings within a twelve-month period without having notified the Chair or Lead Staff, the member will be contacted regarding strategies for participation, alternate designation, or resignation. If a member has prolonged absences even if he/she has notified the Chair or Lead Staff, the designation of a voting alternate will be encouraged
- Serves as a Project Lead for an MRC Project; **and/or**
- Volunteers for at least one MRC project, thus providing aid and support to the Project Lead when necessary.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

- Each MRC has a staff member who is an employee of their County and is managed by their respective County. The staff member's allocation of time may vary by county.
- MRC staff are responsible for managing the operations of the MRC, including member recruitment and management, ensuring the MRC follows the requirements of the County and their own rules of operation, internal and external communication, communication with the county department they are embedded in, and other basic functionality of the group.
- MRC staff provide information about the work of the MRC to Commission staff in order to keep the group apprised of activities, opportunities and challenges.
- MRC staff is a primary communication link between the MRC and Initiative staff. This is important for providing explanations of budget issues, regional programs or other significant matters.
- MRC staff serve as a facilitator of MRC project development by outlining grant requirements, assisting MRCs with project prioritization and coordinating with Initiative staff during proposal development.
- MRC staff work closely with Project Leads to:
 - Draft, finalize, and execute project-related contracts.
 - Draft the annual work plan and update it on a monthly basis.
 - Plan and execute project tasks
- MRC staff are responsible for working with the MRC Chair to:
 - Organize, prepare and distribute the monthly agendas and minutes.
 - Provide periodic MRC updates to the Whatcom County Council and Natural Resources Staff.
 - Develop, finalize and submit MRC grant applications
- MRC staff are responsible for managing Commission grants, including tracking adherence to the scope of work, budget management, preparation and submittal of deliverables and other reporting requirements, initiation of any amendments, monitoring of materials and projects for accuracy, completion, required components and funding credit.
- MRC staff may also apply for and manage non-Commission grants. MRCs should build capacity/project management funding into any non-Commission funded project budgets. If that is not possible, staff should check in with NWS Commission staff to verify that Commission-funded capacity may be used for non-Commission funded projects.

- MRC staff provide regular updates to the Commission on leveraged assistance (in kind, county support, grants, etc.) outside of Commission grants to maintain the Initiative's ability to message organizational success and provide supporting documentation for any required match.
- The MRC staff provides a written monthly report to the Commission. This report is sometimes prepared and/or submitted by the MRC representative to the Commission.
- MRC staff is responsible for maintaining the MRC's records, including grant records and any other records required by the county.
- MRC staff are expected to attend Commission-related events, including the annual MRC conference and all-MRC staff meetings convened by Commission staff.

This agreement endorsed on September X, 2026 in Bellingham, Washington, on behalf of the following members of Whatcom County Marine Resource Committee.

Glen Alexander “Alex”
Citizen-at-Large

Elizabeth Lorence
Conservation-Environmental Interest

Rick Beauregard
Scientific Expertise

Mike MacKay
Scientific Expertise

Jackie Dexter
Economic Interest

Laura Hanna
Recreational Interest

Mark Fairhart
Citizen-at-Large

Paul Meyer
Conservation-Environmental Interest

Alexi Guddal
Conservation-Environmental Interest

Julie Eastlund
Recreational Interest

Colin Wahl
Scientific Expertise

Citizen-at-Large

Economic Interest

Economic Interest