

Members in attendance: Mark Fairhart (Chair), Lisa Anderson (Bellingham City Council), Kathy Ketteridge, Beth Lorence, Glen “Alex” Alexander, Alexi Goodall, Laura Hanna, Austin Rose (staff), Dana Daniels (staff), Mike MacKay, Rick Beauregard, Colin Wahl, Mary Lou Steward (Mayor – Blaine), Paul Meyer, Joe Hoats

Others: Tyler Owens, Pete Haase, Darcy Bird (WA Ecology Spills Program), Julie Hirsch, Elizabeth Kilanowski, Alan Chapman, David Stahlheim, Andrea MacLennan (Herrera Environmental Consultants), Lauren Odie Giles (Herrera Environmental Consultants), Kim Clarkin

- 1. Introductions and Determine Quorum:** Mark began the meeting with the land acknowledgement and roundtable introductions. A quorum was present.
- 2. January 8 Agenda:** The meeting agenda was approved.
- 3. Approval of December Meeting Summary:** The December meeting summary was approved.
- 4. Community Updates:** David Stahlheim explained the formation of The Whatcom Environmental Council and their work on environmental advocacy. He shared concern about the permits for export of propane out of Cherry Point, the Alta Gas expansion. After review and investigation, he found the correlation of hearing spawn decline At Cherry Point against the increased export of propane out of Cherry Point. He also expressed concern about the lack of literal drift along the shoreline. David raised this as a significant environmental issue, and wanted to bring it to the MRC’s attention. David will return in February to have further discussion. Julie Hirsch, Garden of the Salish Sea Curriculum, made a request for volunteers to help with the programs school trips in the intertidal zone. Julie shared an email with the dates and times of the school programs when volunteers are needed.
- 5. MRC Partner Committee Updates:**
 - **County Council** - The oath of office will occur on Monday the 12th at 3 PM, and is open to the public. The Planning Commission is hoping to wrap up their hearings in January around the comprehensive plan. The County Council will be interested in facilitating an amendment process and an opportunity to hear from folks on various chapters. Of particular interest is the Resource Lands chapter 4. Kaylee asked for some more feedback from the MRC addressing the chapter from more of an ecological/environmental lens.
 - **Port of Bellingham** - no update.
 - **City of Blaine** – Mayor Steward learned that the fish cleaning plants at the Blaine Marina may be releasing fish parts into Drayton Harbor. More information will be gathered and shared with the MRC.
 - **Northwest Straits Commission** - The Commission unanimously approved a letter of support for the MERIS project proposed in Blaine. The 2026 Commission meeting dates were released.
- 6. Oil Spill Response Capacity in Whatcom County:** Darcy Bird briefly reviewed the work of WA Ecology’s SPILL program. The post-spill natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) piece was further discussed. The NRDA committee meets once a month and it is a good opportunity to hear how decisions are made around what restoration looks like. Any baseline data of habitat quality or critical habitat of an area is very helpful to understand the pre-spill conditions. There is an idea of creating a restoration clearinghouse to track all of the restoration sites in different localities. Sediment sampling post-spill is litigious, with sampling protocols and chain of custody, so not often something volunteers can help with. Personnel are available to take

environmental samples right after a spill. Darcy suggested that there might be more value in collecting data that is more locally based rather than trying to the resources into post-spill sampling collection. Darcy provided oil spill hotline numbers.

1-800-258-5990 (Washington Emergency Management Division)

1-800-OILS-911

Additional resources:

<https://ecology.wa.gov/spills-cleanup/spills/spill-preparedness-response/restoring-resources-after-spills>

<https://ecology.wa.gov/events/search/search-all?searchtext=natural+resource+damage+assessment+committee&searchmode=allwords>

7. **Clayton Beach Restoration and Bluff Erosion Modeling:** Andrea MacLennan, Herrara Consulting, provided a brief update on the progress of the Clayton Beach Shoreline Restoration Project. The objective of this project is to remove 1,200 linear feet of derelict debris from the beach and restore more natural beach topography. In addition to restoration work, the project will also entail some eradication of invasive species in the marine riparian zone. There is a 13-acre dredge hole - left from trolley operations - where there is a complete absence of eelgrass surrounded by dense eelgrass beds, so this is an incredible opportunity to restore eelgrass. The permitting process is just beginning. The design, completed at 60%, moving forward.

8. **The Woods at Viewcrest – MRC comment letter:** Members reviewed their second comment letter to the City of Bellingham regarding the proposed development the *Woods at Viewcrest*. The group discussed slight edits. A member of the policy subcommittee volunteered to help with the final edits.

A motion was to approve the letter as is, subjected to changes from the Policy subcommittee. All approved.

9. **Staff updates:** Staff met with a representative of [OrcaSound](#) and Whatcom County Parks to discuss the possibility installing a live hydrophone at Lighthouse Marine Park in Point Roberts. There is already signage in place with education about whales that navigate these waters. However, we also discussed the potential of MRC creating new signage for the hydrophone purposes. The committee reviewed the *MRC Roles and Responsibilities*.

10. **MRC Project updates:** Tabled. Members reviewed draft MRC logos.

11. **Adjourn**