



What makes a good MRC chair?

Welcoming – as chair you are the face of the committee. Your attitude and actions should create a welcoming environment for existing members, prospective members, guests, members of the public, elected officials and others who may attend your meetings.

Leadership – you are in a position to show what it means to be a positive and active member of the committee and to lead with vision. Regular checks on committee work and projects during MRC meetings and between meetings are important to make sure things are going smoothly.

Communication – the Chair generally serves as the primary representative and spokesperson for the Marine Resources Committee in the local community. Communicate regularly with local elected officials. Review and sign all official correspondence of the MRC.

MRC Meetings –

- The chair should set the agenda in coordination with MRC staff and your executive committee. The agenda should reflect the needs of the group and provide flexibility to address topics as they arise.
- Keep the group on track and on time and ensure needed decisions are reached. The chair should make sure that the meeting runs smoothly. You will make guest speakers feel comfortable by welcoming them, reminding them of time allotted to them and keeping to the time.
- You will moderate discussions as needed throughout the meeting.
- Acknowledge public – if you have members of the public attending the meeting you should provide an opportunity for them to provide comments if they have any. Public comment should be a standing agenda item at a predictable time.
- In advance of the meeting, review minutes from the previous meeting and provide comments where needed to ensure accuracy and completeness.
- Remind members to disclose the potential for conflict of interest when discussing project plans and ensure that any member recusal from discussion is documented in the minutes.
- Be sure that you are familiar with your MRC by-laws and pertinent county rules.

MRC Staff – you should establish regular communications with your staff person and consider yourself to be the primary liaison between the staff and the MRC. You can help your staff feel appreciated and influence how effective he/she is through regular communication and support.

MRC Grants - Work with the MRC staff to develop grant applications and other MRC activities. Work with the MRC staff to organize review of MRC grant deliverables prior to submission.

MRC Members – the chair is in a good position to recognize people doing good work and those who may be not holding up their end of the bargain.

- Amazing members – as chair you may want to occasionally recognize members who are contributing to the success of the group.
- Unruly members – as chair, you have primary responsibility to deal with anyone at the meeting who is counter-productive to the meeting, whether their actions are direct or indirect. In general, you should not allow anyone to be disrespectful of staff or other members. Your members will look to you to lay down the rules. Please talk to the NWSC Director if you need help strategizing how to deal with unruly guests or members.
- Inactive members - if you have some consistently inactive members, you should work with your staff to get members motivated or remove them from the committee. Inactive members can bring everyone down.

Northwest Straits staff

- Making decisions by consensus – we are a consensus based organization which applies to MRCs as well as Commission meetings. This means that it's important for everyone around the table to be OK with decisions. This is different than standard voting. Voting asks for yes and no and the majority wins. Consensus means taking the time to get it right so that everyone can live with it. Many actions of the MRC are small – approve minutes, approve an action, etc. but the technique should be the same for small and large decisions. Use a modified Roberts Rules - ask for a motion, get a second, ask if there's further discussion and when discussion is done you ask for a nod of heads or you ask if everyone is good with what you're doing. Look around the group for approval. If someone is uncomfortable give that person time to speak and then take the time to see if you can get that person on board. At worst, sometimes you have to ask if they can "live with it" even if they may not like it.
- Northwest Straits Commission reports – please always make sure that your Northwest Straits Commission representative has time to share what's happening from the Commission meeting they attended. If the representative missed the Commission meeting, see if they have information about what happened from Commission staff. We rely on this representative to provide essential communications and the Commission provides meeting summaries that can be very helpful even to share with the full MRC even if your representative is absent.
- Northwest Straits Commission communication – the Commission staff tend to communicate directly with the representatives and MRC staff but we welcome the involvement of MRC chairs as much as you are able. Please feel free to contact any Commission staff at any time with questions or concerns.
- Our website www.nwstraits.org has a lot of useful information on current work and historical information that you may find helpful.