



MRC Members

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

Rick Beauregard (NWSC rep)
Scientific
Term 1: 01/31/2027

Jace Cotton
City of Bellingham, Council

Jackie Dexter
Economic
Term 1: 01/31/2027

Mark Fairhart
Citizen-at-large
Term 1: 01/31/2028

Kaylee Galloway
Designated, County Council

Alexi Guddal
Conservation/Environmental
Partial: 01/31/2026

Joe Hoats
Economic
Term 1: 01/31/2028

Kathy Ketteridge (Vice-Chair)
Citizen-at-Large
Term 1: 01/31/2026

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

Mike MacKay (NWSC alt rep)
Scientific
Term 2: 01/31/2028

Paul Meyer
Conservation/Environmental
Term 1: 01/31/2029

Andrew Shelton (Chair)
Economic
Term 1: 01/31/2028

Mary Lou Steward
City of Blaine, Mayor

Colin Wahl
Scientific
Term 2: 01/31/2029

Vacancies

2 Recreational Interest
positions

Nooksack Tribe Representative
Lummi Nation Representative

WHATCOM MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY | June 5, 2025 5:00pm – 7:00pm ZOOM [LINK](#), Meeting ID: 829 8756 4534 | Passcode 868735 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.

Time	Agenda Item	Lead	Action Y/N
1.	Introductions and Determine Quorum		
2.	June 5 Agenda <i>Modify and approve agenda as needed. New business can be added if necessary.</i>		Y
3.	Approval of April meeting summary and May meeting summary <i>Review and approve summary as final.</i>		
4.	Community Updates <i>Community members attending the meeting who wish to address or update the Committee on MRC related matters will be provided up to five (5) minutes to speak.</i>		
5.	2024 Biotoxin/HABS Programs: Tracie Barry, Marine Biotoxin Specialist, Washington State Department of Health and Rick Beauregard, Whatcom MRC <i>Overview of the 2024 regional biotoxin monitoring season and a summary of results from Semiahmoo and Birch Bay.</i>	Tracie Rick	
6.	Staff Updates: MRC Chair election, upcoming outreach events (Day at the Beach – June 7 th , What's the Point - June 14 th , Bellingham SeaFeast - September 27 th), 2025-27 grant application, meeting schedule/format	Austin/Dana	Y
7.	MRC Project Updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPAR Intertidal Monitoring Beach Seine with Schools Vessel turn-in event Olympia oyster Eelgrass Protection – Wildcat Cove 	Mark Mike Austin Jackie	
8.	MRC Partner Committee Updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> County Council Port of Bellingham City of Blaine Northwest Straits Commission 	Kaylee Kurt Mary Lou Rick	
9.	Adjourn		

In attendance: Austin Rose (staff), Dana Flerchinger (staff), Paul Meyer, Mike MacKay, Joe Hoats, Glen Alexander "Alex", Mark Fairhart, Rick Beauregard, Alexi Guddal, Beth Lorence, Kaylee Galloway, Jackie Dexter, Andrew Shelton

Community members who require special assistance to participate in a committee meeting are to contact MRC Staff at least 4 business days in advance.

arose@co.whatcom.wa.us

Others: Alan Chapman, Tracie Berry (WDOH), Victoria (GSSC)

1. **Introductions and Determine Quorum:** Austin provided the land acknowledgement and began the meeting with roundtable introductions. A quorum was present.
2. **June 5 Agenda:** The meeting agenda was approved with the addition of “Eelgrass Preservation at Wildcat Cove”
3. **Approval of April meeting summary and May meeting summary:** The April and May meeting summaries were approved.
4. **Community Updates:** A derelict vessel (~17’ Bayliner) has been spotted in the Teddy Bear Cove area. An MRC member has taken pictures via kayak. Staff reminded folks to utilize the [MyCoast app](#) to notify state agencies (such as DNR) of nearshore hazards.
5. **2024 Biotoxin/HABS Programs:** Tracie Barry, Marine Biotoxin Specialist, Washington State Department of Health (DOH), explained that DOH, as a health authority, has administrative authority over commercial shellfish harvesting, and that includes risk, assessment, management of illnesses, and marine biotoxins fall under that classification status. The DOH marine biotoxin program operates differently from long-term monitoring for polluted growing areas (which focuses on fecal coliforms). Instead, the biotoxin program is focused on immediate, real-time impacts based on the presence of active marine toxins. The program is required to have a contingency plan for harmful algal blooms (HABs) that produce toxins impacting human health. However, the Department currently lacks the ability to directly test for some of these toxins. The contingency plan relies on reports of human illness or, more proactively, on phytoplankton monitoring conducted by the MRC and others. This monitoring helps identify potential toxin-producing blooms and guides decisions about shellfish testing. the program’s management is highly dependent on environmental monitoring and community health reports with an emphasis on early detection through phytoplankton observation to trigger shellfish testing and protect consumers from marine biotoxins.

Rick Beauregard, MRC HAB project lead, explained that the Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) team has been conducting phytoplankton sampling since 2021. In 2023, this phytoplankton monitoring became an official MRC project. Sampling stations include Birch Bay and Semiahmoo. Not all Washington State Department of Health sites that monitor mussels also conduct phytoplankton sampling, and not all SoundToxins phytoplankton sites are sampling mussels. This makes the MRC’s sites particularly important, as they allow for comparative analysis between the presence of Alexandrium (a genus of algae that can produce toxins) and actual toxin levels in shellfish. The HABs team monitors several types of phytoplankton, including Pseudonitzschia, Dinophysis, and Alexandrium. Special focus is given to Alexandrium, as it is the primary cause of shellfish bed closures in Whatcom County due to its toxin production. The 2024 monitoring results were shared. Check out the monitoring report, “[Four Years of Monitoring Phytoplankton and Harmful Algae in Drayton Harbor and Birch Bay, Whatcom County](#)”.

6. **Staff Updates:**
 - **MRC Chair election:** Andrew Shelton resigned as MRC Chair. A new Chair will be elected at the August MRC meeting.
 - **upcoming outreach events:** The MRC will table at upcoming outreach events including: The Day at the Beach Celebration on June 7th from 9-12pm at Birch Bay State Park and the What’s the Point Intertidal Exploration event on June 14 from 12-3pm at Point Whitehorn Park.
 - **2025-27 grant application:**
 - **meeting schedule/format:** No MRC meeting will be held in July due to the holiday.

7. MRC Project Updates:

Community members who require special assistance to participate in a committee meeting are to contact MRC Staff at least 4 business days in advance.

arose@co.whatcom.wa.us

- **CPAR Intertidal Monitoring:** The MRC will be piloting 2 intertidal monitoring surveys this summer. The first survey is at Barnacle Rock, Birch Bay State Park next Thursday, June 12. About 12 volunteers signed up. There are a couple more spots available. There is another opportunity to participate at Neptune Beach on Thursday, July 24. This work was previously conducted by RE Sources, who no longer have the funding to continue the program. An MRC subcommittee and staff have also been meeting to discuss the value of the data and how the monitoring plan could be adjusted to better reflect the interests of the MRC.
- **Beach Seine with Schools:** The MRC wrapped up efforts for the 2025 Beach Seine with Kids events. The project team held a follow-up meeting to discuss any feedback and changes to make to the program in coming years.
- **Vessel turn-in event:** The next planning meeting is scheduled for June 25. A flyer has been developed and is being shared widely. Applications close July 1st (back up extension date July 15th). Vessel turn-in and recycling begins tentatively July 28th. An on-site media day is planned for August 6th with the project team, invited media, and elected officials. A communications group is working on planning for the Media Day and associated materials. There is a tentative site visit June 30th (afternoon) for the project planning team to discuss logistics for the turn in event and media day.
- **Olympia oyster:** On May 29th, the MRC conducted their final Olympia oyster population survey in North Chuckanut Bay with assistance of students from the Bellingham Technical College Fisheries and Aquaculture Program. At two of the seven surveyed sites, live adult Olympia oysters were observed, but no larval recruitment was observed. This was the last population survey in North Chuckanut Bay as this site has not yielded promising results for Olympia oyster restoration over the past 6 years. The Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) completed and submitted a final report to the MRC regarding their findings from a qualitative assessment of suitable habitat and existing Olympia oysters that was conducted in Drayton Harbor in March. The focus areas that were identified included the reaches of shoreline between California Creek and the end of Semiahmoo Spit. The report includes recommendations for project actions, background information on Olympia oyster ecology, and current understandings of metapopulation function. On June 24th, staff with WDFW, the MRC, and the NWSC will head to areas of Drayton Harbor that were identified by the Puget Sound Restoration Fund as suitable habitat for Olympia oyster restoration. The goal of this survey will be to identify specific plots that would be the most suitable to set up bioassays for further testing.
- **Eelgrass Protection in Wildcat Cove:** MRC members and staff have met with WA State Parks staff at Larrabee to schedule Northwest Straits Foundation interns to provide eelgrass outreach at Wildcat Cove boat ramp on low tide days this summer. Alex and Mike mentioned that they could fill in during low tide events at the Cove when the interns aren't able to be there.

8. MRC Partner Committee Updates:

- **County Council:** The council recently approved the countywide planning policies, which are intended to guide the entire comprehensive plan process. There was also a presentation on the comprehensive water systems plan, with interest in determining how this work is coordinated with the comprehensive plan. The key focus is on integrating water availability and resource planning with broader growth and development planning, ensuring these efforts are aligned for effective future management. This year is a mid-biennium review for the budget, since the County operates on a biennial (two-year) budget cycle. The current year is considered an "off year," so only adjustments are expected with no major changes. A recurring theme will be monitoring and addressing the broader implications and uncertainties related to limitations in Federal funding.
- **Port of Bellingham:** No report.
- **City of Blaine:** No report.
- **Northwest Straits Commission:** Rick provided highlights from the last NWSC meeting which included a presentation from Clallum MRC on the process for providing advice to their county commissions. The

Community members who require special assistance to participate in a committee meeting are to contact MRC Staff at least 4 business days in advance.

arose@co.whatcom.wa.us

Whatcom MRC has discussed this in the past, so it may be helpful to reference this to see if we want to use a similar process. Other highlights included that the Anchor out of Eelgrass online program is now live, the 2025 MRC conference is scheduled for November 7th and 8th in La Conner, and Jake Beatty discussed the Blue Schools Initiative.

9. Adjourn

Community members who require special assistance to participate in a committee meeting are to contact MRC Staff at least 4 business days in advance.

arose@co.whatcom.wa.us