



Members in attendance: Austin Rose (staff), Dana Daniels (staff), Laura Hanna, Mike MacKay, Paul Cline, Mark Fairhart, Abby Neal, Paul Meyer, Glen Alexander, Rick Beauregard, Colin Wahl, Jackie Dexter, Alexi Guddal, Beth Lorence, Kaylee Galloway, Lisa Anderson, Mary Lou Steward, and Kurt Baumgarten.

Others: Lucy Ritter (WWU student and presenter), Jeff Whitty (NWSC), Sasha Horst (NWSC), Julie Hirsh (GSSC), Tyler Owens, Kieran and Edward Lund, Elizabeth Kilanowski, Maggie Taylor, and Alan Chapman.

1. **Introductions and Determine Quorum:** Mark began the meeting with the land acknowledgement and roundtable introductions. A quorum was present.
2. **March 5 Agenda:** The March meeting agenda was approved.
3. **Approval of February Meeting Summary:** The February meeting summary was approved.
4. **Community Updates:** Julie Hirsh, Garden of the Salish Sea Curriculum, is hosting several intertidal beach walks and looking for volunteers to help out.
5. **MRC Partner Committee Updates:**
 - **County Council:** Council received the official Planning Commission recommended version of the Comprehensive Plan on February 10 and kicked off an intensive 2 to 3-month review process. Council will be reviewing chapter by chapter, providing opportunity for members of the public speak at each of the special committee meetings on the chapters that are on those committee meeting agendas.
 - **City Council:** The public library is putting on an event called Explore the Salish Sea – a 360° projection of the ecological web. This is in partnership with Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Program, Friends of San Juan, and Bellingham Public Works. The City completed to fish passage projects along Padden Creek. On April 25 there will be a guided tour of the completed projects. [Learn more about the guided tour.](#)
 - **Port of Bellingham:** Kurt is working with his colleague to present information about the Port's Green Marine Program to the MRC. A small boat wash ashore at Little Squalicum Beach, and is been there for several years. It was washed up in the Burlington- Northern right away, and it has not been easy to negotiate its removal. A recent storm is now washed the boat onto Port property, and the Port has been talking with the City to come through with equipment and staff to cut up the boat and get off the beach. The port recently acquired all the permits for the West Marine cleanup - the boat garden shipyard has historically been. There is a July 15 work window, if the funding falls in the place. The Port is Submitting the JARPA permits for the Whatcom Waterway Phase II cleanup. The shoreline area between Roeder and Holly in front of the Waterfront Tavern as remnant piles of creosote, concrete blocks, and garbage that the Port is set to clean up. It is a complicated project with seven different property owners including the State, Port, County and the City. The Port will be creating a Fairhaven boat launch facility at the Community Boating Center, which will enhance and expand the pocket beach that's already down there. The facility will be ADA accessible which is unique as Bellingham does Not have that type of accessible launch. That is scheduled to go up for construction in early September. [Learn more about the Green Marine certification program.](#)
[View the Port of Bellingham 2025 sustainability report as a StoryMap](#)
[Download sustainability report as a PDF](#)
 - **City of Blaine:** Main Street in the City of Blaine had to be reconstructed to make it ADA compatible. This impacted downtown businesses. There was local concern of contaminants reaching Drayton Harbor. All

samples came out clean, and sampling was done every day of construction. The next focus is the Port area and cleaning of contamination from their practices. This is an important step towards developing the MERIS project. City Council will also be talking about the future of Marine Park.

- **Northwest Straits Commission:** Rick reported that the Department of Natural Resources removed at least three derelict boats from Drayton Harbor. A fourth boat left voluntarily. These boats have been reported for several years, and have caused damage to the shoreline and shellfish beds. The commission retreat will be held on April 2 and April 3. There are two NW Straits commission 101 (virtual) presentations coming up, which staff forwarded meeting links for. These are highly encouraged for both new and old members to attend. Rick reminded the committee to remember the kind of money that is leveraged by the volunteers on the MRC, and how it is always good to refresh that information to local elects.

6. Bioluminescence in Bellingham Bay Presentation: Lucy Ritter, an undergraduate student at Western Washington University presented her capstone project on bioluminescence in Bellingham Bay.

7. New MRC Vice Chair Nominations: Due to the recent resignation of Kathy Ketteridge, the MRC no longer has a Vice Chair. Laura Hanna volunteered to be Vice Chair. Paul Meyer volunteered to be a backup.

8. Discussion and Vote on MRC Project Proposal for Additional Funding

The Northwest Straits Commission announced an additional funding opportunity for MRCs, up to \$20,000 per MRC. This optional funding is available due to leftover funds from past NOAA Congressionally Directed Spending. The MRC would need to submit grant proposals by March 17th and funds must be expended by December 31, 2026. Because of this timeline, it is recommended that the funding be used for enhancements of existing projects unless there is a new project that is already “shovel ready”. The MRC discussed options for this funding opportunity including:

- **Education and Outreach Materials:** create an education and outreach mold toolkit the MRC can either take with tabling or do beach education. The idea is to create something very simple and portable with easy to implement lesson plans.
- **Wildcat Cove Eelgrass Preservation:** this is a shovel ready project as the MRC has been providing eelgrass education at Wildcat Cove over the past couple of years. The intent is to hire two interns that could be at the boat launch, talking with boaters, at low tides during the summer, particularly during open crabbing season. These two interns would be hired on at the County, as part-time extra help temporary positions.

Staff suggesting submitting a proposal for both projects. A motion was made for MRC volunteers to work with staff on submitting a proposal to the Northwest Straits Commission to 1) enhance the MRC’s education materials (Paul and Alexi), and 2) fund interns at Wildcat Cove. Motion was seconded. *All approved.*

9. MRC Project Updates:

- Beach Seine with Schools:** Mike provided an update on the project, letting folks know that kickoff meetings have begun for 2026 efforts, and the field event dates have been set for April 14th, May 12th, and May 22nd, each from 11-1:35pm at Boulevard Park. Mike asked for interested volunteers to sign-up for the events they are able to help out at. Volunteers are primarily needed for the beach seining portion of the field event, to help students to observe and identify juvenile salmon, answer questions, help students fill out datasheets, and keep students engaged. Volunteer help would also be great for the pre and post classroom visits.



- b. *Forage Fish Monitoring* – Dana mentioned that the next forage fish surveys are scheduled for 3/24 from 2:30-3:30pm at Clayton Beach and 3/26 from 2:30-4:30pm at Little Squalicum Beach.
- c. *Kelp Monitoring Surveys* – Dana mentioned that kelp kickoff meetings have started, and she will update the MRC with training and survey dates and times when available. Kayak safety trainings are available at Bowman Bay on May 30th and 31st. Registration is required.
- d. *Harmful Algal Bloom Sampling* – Dana attended the Sound Toxins training which included presentations on HAB research and what’s happening in our region. Dana will send links to the recordings when available.
- e. *Olympia Oyster Restoration*: There have been recent meetings with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund regarding the deployment of oysters in Drayton Harbor. The field dates are set for **April 21** and **April 22**. MRC volunteers are welcome! Bellingham Technical College students have been invited. The MRC will be deploying oysters in North Chuckanut Bay as well. Volunteers will be needed that day. There will likely be morning crews and afternoon crews at both deployment events.

10. MRC Subcommittee Updates

Policy/Advisory (temporary title): Mike mentioned that he has followed up with David Stalheim ([see February meeting summary](#)) and provided his information of herring in the Cherry Point area. The committee was reminded that if the MRC has interest about a project or an activity on Whatcom County marine shoreline or marine environment, there is an opportunity to share concerns about particular resources that are present in these areas.

11. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 7pm.