



WHATCOM MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY | May 7, 2026 5:00pm – 7:00pm | Hybrid

Members in attendance: Austin Rose (staff), Dana Daniels (staff), Glen “Alex” Alexander, Laura Hanna, Mike MacKay, Mark Fairhart, Paul Meyer, Rick Beauregard, Jackie Dexter, Colin Wahl, Alexi Guddal, Beth Lorence, Kaylee Galloway, Mary Lou Steward, Lisa Anderson

Others: Tyler Owens, Tori Kaufman, Be Whale Wise Coordinator, the Whale Museum, Cheryl Lovato-Niles, WSU Whatcom County Extension, WWIN, Alan Chapman, Doug

1. **Introductions and Determine Quorum:** Mark began the meeting with the land acknowledgement and roundtable introductions. A quorum was present.
2. **May 2 Agenda:** The May meeting agenda was approved.
3. **Approval of April Meeting Summary:** The April meeting summary was approved.
4. **Community Updates:** No community updates.
5. **MRC Partner Committee Updates:**
 - **County Council:** Council is continuing to work on the comprehensive plan. They are still working through some of the MRC’s proposed amendments to Chapter 10. Kaylee has been working on an ordinance with the Whatcom Humane Society regarding fireworks, which is been a long-standing debate with the community. The ordinance addresses firework impact to animal welfare, beach debris, water quality issues.
 - **City Council:** The City of Bellingham announced recently that the Parks department was closing the trail along the Squalicum inlet. The reason it will be closed is due to erosion caused by higher tides and more water flow coming down Whatcom Creek. The trail does Not have sufficient support, and the City doesn’t want to contribute more erosion from activity on top.
 - **Port of Bellingham:** no update
 - **City of Blaine:** The closing of Drayton Harbor to shellfish harvesting is not due to the water treatment plant. The Department of Health has eliminated the treatment plant as a cause for any contamination.
 - **Northwest Straits Commission:** Jamie Stephens is the new Chair for the Commission. Jamie serves on the Island County MRC, and heads the Island Oil Spill Association (IOSA). Representative Rick Larson has expressed interest in visiting MRC project sites. The European Green Crab Project is going to change. Instead of monitoring traps they’re looking at a program where MRC’s could monitor for molts. The commission is interested in knowing whether the MRC would like to participate in this.

Cheryl Lovato-Niles is part of the region-wide molt search program and will be offering workshops this summer. It’s a great way to help increase the number of eyes on the beach, looking for evidence of new spread of the invasive Green crab, and folks report what they find the free app called MyCoast. Trapping and removal efforts will continue, and there is a coalition of folks, which includes the Sea Grant’s Crab Team, and then Washington for each Department of Fish and Wildlife, and tribes, and shellfish growers, who are all part of this multi-agency coordination effort. The role of molts search is

to be a lower barrier way to do the monitoring as trapping is labor-intensive and there is a limitation on how much can be done.

Discussion in chat

alan Chapman:	<i>There is some discussion of expanding the molt surveys to tabulate Dungeness crabs to gain some information on the juvenile growth periods for management purposes.</i>
Cheryl Lovato Niles:	<i>Yes, Alan that is correct. We are now collecting data on Dungeness molts as well.</i>
Jackie:	<i>I wish there was an easier way to include GC larvae counts during light trap surveys for dungees</i>
alan Chapman:	<i>Lummi did a reservation intertidal baseline survey for possible use in recovering damages. It outlines the level of baseline survey work required for that purpose. You might check with LNR if you are interested in what it takes to provide the detail necessary</i>

6. Be Whale Wise: Tori Kaufman, Be Whale Wise Coordinator at the Whale Museum in Friday Harbor on San Juan Island presented information on Be Whale Wise program. Tori shared the regulations and guidelines that are at the core of the Be Whale Wise message, history of the program and its current work, challenges, and opportunities to get involved. Be Whale Wise is a partnership of governmental agencies, nonprofits, and other stakeholders in British Columbia and Washington state. together to create consistent messaging around how to have best practices around whales and other marine mammals in the Salish Sea. [Check out more about the Be Whale Wise Program.](#)

7. MRC Project Updates:

- a. *Beach Seine with Schools:* Mike mentioned they had a successful Beach Seine with Schools event on April 14. It was very stormy and cold but several salmonids were caught (42 chum, 18 pink). Upcoming events include:
Tuesday, May 12th (~70 students from Columbia Elementary School)
Friday, May 22nd (~70 students from Cordata Elementary School)
- b. *Forage Fish Monitoring* – Dana mentioned that the next forage fish surveys are scheduled for 5/28 10-11am at Clayton Beach, and 5/29 from 9:00am – 10:00am at Little Squaticum Beach.
- c. *Wildcat Cove* - There will soon be an announcement posted for two internship opportunities to continue social marketing work the MRC has done at Wildcat Cove. Aiming for a start date of June 9 or June 22.
- d. *Harmful Algal Bloom Sampling* – Whatcom County beaches are all currently closed for recreational shellfish collection, due to biotoxins. Vibrio season started on May 1. So, if and when the biotoxins signs come down, they will be posting the Vibrio warning, which urges people to cook shellfish. Biotoxins you can't cook out. This also triggers testing commercial shellfish for biotoxins. Drayton Harbor Oyster Company are testing their shellfish and so far, there have been non-detects.
- e. *Olympia Oyster Restoration:* The deployment in Drayton Harbor was a success. All of the cultch was spread amongst the pilot plots. Tons of volunteers participated. Drone footage was taken. June 10, 200 shell bags will be set in three pilot plots in North Chuckanut Bay. Those bags will be opened and shell will be spread in August.

8. MRC Subcommittee Updates:

Policy/Advisory (temporary title): Laura has a meeting set up with people to talk about the goals of the subcommittee like this. She will schedule meetings in the near future.

Education and outreach: The subcommittee drafted and intertidal lesson plan that will be piloted at Day at the Beach on May 30. The MRC will also be tabling at What's the Point on June 14 at Point Whitehorn.

Volunteer engagement and recruitment: no update.

MRC Executive: WA State Parks asked for a letter of support from the MRC for a RCO grant application they plan to submit. They are looking for funding to improve ADA accessibility at Wildcat Cove boat launch and support a more permanent sign about eelgrass education. Staff provided a draft letter in the meeting materials.

A motion was made to approve the letter of support. All in favor. No discussion. Motion carries.

9. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 6:52pm. The next meeting is scheduled for June 4, and it will be virtual.