

Minutes

Prepared by Jill Lipoti

May 6, 2025

In-person and online

Present: Jill Lipoti, Chair, Commissioner Melanie Bacon (ex officio), Barbara Bennett, Joshua Berkowitz, Scott Chase, Greg Easton, Patrick Havel, Andi Kopit, Kirk Larsen, Paul Ben McElwain, Jennifer Schmitz, Jeff Wheeler, Kelly Zupich, MRC Staff

Absent: Kelly Webb (Notified)

Visitors: Lori Fenstermacher, Karen Fenstermacher, Carlie Miller, IC Surface Water Quality, Renee Zavas-Silva, IC Surface Water Quality, Quinn Farr, Pollution Identification Coordinator and Beach and Shellfish Lead, Allie Hudec, Sound Water Stewards, Dana Oster, NWSC, Sasha Horst, NWSC

Call to Order: Jill called the meeting to order at 3pm. Introductions: Introductions were made.

Quorum: A quorum was declared. Agenda: The agenda was approved. Minutes, the Minutes from April 1, 2025 were corrected to show that Paul Ben McElwain and Joshua Berkowitz were notified absences. A motion to approve the minutes as corrected was made by Barbara Bennett and seconded by Andi Kopit. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Tribal Acknowledgement:

We acknowledge the lands we are 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.

Correspondence:

Request from South Whidbey Robotics club for a presentation on August 4, 2025 regarding plankton identification, with emphasis on the types of plankton that the MRC would like to look for, including toxics. Kirk and Andi volunteered to assist.

Report from Jennifer Schmitz:

All day Shore Friendly Retreat on May 7 at the Cornet Bay retreat center for all of the Shore Friendly coordinators to get together and exchange information. All day Ecosystem Coordination Board (PSP) meeting to discuss shoreline armoring on May 8 and the Cornet Bay retreat center. The MRC coordinator position was approved for hiring and was posted on May 6 – all members should make this widely available to recruit candidates for Kelly Zupich's replacement.

A tribute to outgoing coordinator Kelly Zupich was presented by Chair Lipoti. Kelly's influence on all things MRC will have a lasting impact on the organization and on marine ecosystems. A cake will be planned for the future.

The meeting was then opened for discussion of the project proposals for 2025-2027. Each project was reviewed in relation to the MRC's capacity and budget. In order to accommodate new proposals for derelict crab pots and forage fish, the amount of administrative hours for the other projects needed to be scaled back.

The team also discussed the challenges of managing multiple projects and administrative tasks without an administrator, the need for a team lead for each project, and the importance of having someone take minutes and prepare agendas, the budget for the upcoming years, and the importance of education and outreach.

Questions were raised about the possibility of getting additional administrative support, but there is a hiring freeze. The MRC has been granted an exemption from the freeze because the coordinator's position was deemed critical.

Each of the following projects were discussed:

- Bull Kelp Monitoring (Ken Collins/ PaulBen McElwain/ Carter Webb)
- Cornet Bay Restoration Stewardship (Jill Lipoti)
- Hoypus Point Restoration Stewardship (Jill Lipoti)
- Derelict Vessel Education Program (Kelly Webb)
- Forage Fish Survey (Kirk Larsen)
- General Outreach and Education Subcommittee (Andi Kopit, Josh Berkowitz, Scott Chase)
 - Crabber education
 - Classroom / Field education
 - Booth Displays Annually
 - Jan Holmes Award
 - Presentations
 - Commissioner Communications
- Advisory Work – Comp Plan
- Shoreline Armoring
- DEI Subcommittee
- Derelict Crab Pot location Surveys (Jeff Wheeler)
- Forage Fish – New Study (Kirk Larsen) (There will be a consultation with the Science Advisory Committee for this new project, but it will occur after the project proposal is due.)
- LIO Committee attendance (PaulBen McElwain)

- SRTC Meeting Attendance (Josh Berkowitz will fill out the form for joining)

Next steps

Jeff Wheeler to determine the number of side scan sonar surveys for derelict crab pot removal in 2026 and 2027, and discuss budget details with Lynn Wenberg and Ken.

Paul Ben to co-lead the kelp monitoring project with Ken Collins and write up the project proposal.

Kirk Larson to refine the new forage fish proposal and prepare example research project ideas.

Kelly to send out annual report templates to project leads.

Education and Outreach subcommittee to meet and discuss potential new initiatives and budget allocation.

Andy to explore ideas for junior MRC and classroom engagement opportunities.

Kelly to update the MRC on the status of the Camano Sea Level Rise workshop and potential cancellation.

Barbara Bennett to draft role clarification for technical advisors.

Paul Ben to attend LIO Technical Committee meetings as the MRC representative which will free up a slot for another member of Sound Water Stewards to attend.

Josh Berkowitz to complete the application for SRFB representative.

Commissioner Bacon to follow up with potential new MRC member about their interest in the kelp monitoring project.

Public Remarks: There were complaints that the MRC Minutes were not extensive enough. The attendees discussed the difficulty of drafting minutes without the support of a coordinator. The question was raised about just using the recording of the meeting, but written minutes are a deliverable to the NWSC, so it is necessary to have someone draft the minutes. Additionally, the Open Public Meetings Act requires that minutes be posted. For the interim, Jill Lipoti will draft minutes.

There were complaints about the composition of the MRC – that all the members have similar opinions and that there is not a diversity of viewpoints. The committee said “let the minutes reflect that we would welcome diverse viewpoints.”

Vote: The MRC members realize that they are stretched to be able to do all of the projects, but there was a consensus that we go forward with all of the projects, expecting that any vacancies on the MRC will be filled with people ready and willing to work. Approval of the tentative

budgets for 2026-2027 were moved by Kirk Larson and seconded by PaulBen McElwain. They were approved unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:00pm.