



SAN JUAN COUNTY
Marine Resources
Committee



Marine Advisory Committees **MRC-CAG-LIO** **Meeting Agenda**

Thursday, August 6th, 2026
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Microsoft Teams

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9:00 AM	Convene MRC Meeting – Adam Parrott
9:05 AM	Public Comment
9:10 AM	Approve meeting agenda – All Approve MRC July meeting minutes – MRC Members
9:15 AM	Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Updates- Mike Ramsey
9:25 AM	MRC Updates/Business • Update/Discussion re SJC Budget Process/ Reorganization Options – <i>Tillery Williams</i> • Planning for NWSC Conference Collaborative Networking Activity- <i>Sam Whitridge</i> • Scheduling for September MRC Meeting- <i>Sam Whitridge</i> • MRC subcommittee updates ○ Outreach & Education- <i>Katie Johnson</i> ○ Plastic Free Salish Sea- <i>Karin Roemers-Kleven/Katie Johnson</i> ○ Seagrass Protection- <i>Olivia Graham/Katie Johnson</i> ○ Derelict Vessel Prevention- <i>Adam Parrott/Kari Koski</i> ○ Oil Spill/ERTV-<i>Sam Whitridge/Charles Bookman</i> • Report on SJ County Council letter to Gov. Ferguson drafted by MRC • Update/Discussion re: U.S. Rep Larsen's oil spill preparedness efforts
10:30 AM	Committee member updates and any other business

10:40 AM	Adjourn MRC Meeting Convene CAG Meeting
10:40 AM	Final CAG Scoring and Ranking of 2026 Salmon Recovery Funding Board Grant Proposals- <i>Sam Whitridge</i>
11:15 AM	Adjourn CAG Meeting Convene LIO Meeting
11:15 AM	LIO Business/Updates- Katie Johnson/Jason Lim • Puget Sound Partnership Updates • LIO program Local Forum August 19th • Prep for SJLIO Action Plan Vessel Impacts • Discussion re: LIO newsletter/monthly update email • Update on Mooring Buoy Surveys • WDFW Kelp Workshops
12:00 PM	Adjourn LIO Meeting

MRC, CAG and LIO Committee Members in Attendance: Charles Bookman, Kailey Genther, Rich Goodhart, Olivia Graham, Adam Parrott, Lovel Pratt, Mike Ramsey, Karin Roemers-Kleven, Flora Vaught, Sandy Wyllie-Echeverria

Ex-officio, County support staff and members of the public: Elizabeth Butler, Paul Cline, Brendan Cowan, Audrey Coyne, Jesse Douglas-Seitz, Gregg Dunphy, Colin Huntemer, Katie Johnson, Kari Koski, Jason Lim, Kari McVeigh, Tida Rau, Frances Robertson, Leah Skare, Kimbal Sundberg, Sam Whitridge, Tillery Williams

9:03 AM **Convene MRC Meeting** *Adam Parrott*

9:04 AM **Public Comment** *none*

9:05 AM **Approve Meeting Agenda** *All*

Sam: one addition, Frankie will provide an update on the marine CIP (capital improvement plan) - approved

Approve MRC July Meeting Minutes *MRC Members*

Sandy moves to approve the minutes, Mike seconds

9:06 AM **Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Updates** *Mike Ramsey*

I missed the meeting in person due to cancelled ferry. There was a site visit to a Pigeon guillemot monitoring site. The Science Advisory Committee is actively helping members with ongoing projects, contact Dana Oster by September 18th if interested. Voluntary fecal monitoring workshop on first day of MRC conference. NW Straits staff gave an overview of kayak-based bull kelp surveys, there's an interactive story map description with a data map and trends, contact Jeff Whitty with any questions. NW Straits is working with Makah tribe on a vessel turn-in event, they're expecting 28 boats. MRC congressional/legislative site visits are in progress, contact Lucas Hart with any questions. Lovel, Charles and I agreed to help with planning. Frankie offered to invite legislators on a flight survey and we're working to organize dates; we'll discuss boater impacts, and risks and prevention for oil spills. Frankie: "Light hawk connects skilled volunteer pilots with conservation nonprofits, journalists, scientists, land trusts, and Tribal partners to provide aerial access where it is needed most.", <https://www.lighthawk.org> Staff reviewed strategic plan actions through 2027, planning for next MRC grant round will start in January 2027. To better plan for a variety of funding scenarios, staff gathering baseline data. Commission will meet August 28th Sam: Jamie Stephens says Debra Lekanoff will be on Orcas late August, maybe she can visit an MRC-related site

9:13 AM **MRC Updates/Business**

• Update/Discussion re SJC Budget Process/ Reorganization Options

Tillery Williams

The County has been building the 2027 budget, working to close a \$4 million budget deficit. To address this, County Council had a series of meetings in June to hear from department heads and elected officials. On June 30th, proposed over \$3 million in solutions including a restructuring of Environmental Stewardship (ES). Proposed to eliminate the Facilities Director position and move ES & Marine staff to Parks. County Deputy Manager would oversee utilities. This would save about \$300K. Plan for no loss of function. There's also a proposal to eliminate the Ag Resources Director position. Meeting this past Monday and budget meeting planned for Aug 25th Kari: there's a lot of misinformation out in community. This plan for ES will represent a significant amount of savings. We're not disbanding ES, the department will still exist. The only change is that the members in it will have different supervisors who will meet regularly so they can work together in sync and won't be bifurcated or distracted. ES was designed to be a collaborative group, both with external and internal agencies. There should be no

change in branding. We hope this is temporary, when we find additional money to support a new director, we'll work toward that, but we don't know when that could happen.

Lovel Pratt: It's unfortunate to claim that removing the director's position will be inconsequential. I don't believe using multiple supervisors to manage this staff will be an efficient use of County resources. As the MRC, the projects we work on and receive grants for on behalf of the County require the collaboration of the ES team. In the budget deficit that occurred in 2008-9, we went to the voters with a specific list and got their support. I encourage the County to use that approach. Our county depends on the environment and the ES is the one department addressing that with issues like tourism and second home development

Karin: I agree with Lovel that this department is the glue for our water-based community. Additionally, I have criticism for both County Council and management. I'm a nurse and I've been a manager all my life; I was able to do that because I was supervising other nurses, and we all spoke the same language. That allowed me to be a flexible leader. Taking Kendra out of this structure of the ES team and outsourcing to other managers without her experience will mean losing some of our funding, grants, and support of Tribes. Kendra has been on a leave of absence and she's due for retirement soon. Do you want to terminate an employee who's in a protected class before her retirement (April/May of next year)? Waiting would allow time to organize. I would suggest having these staff self-manage, give them time to figure that out, like six months

Flora: Kari, you said that once the budget improves maybe the director position could be re-funded, can that really be guaranteed? Council members change and priorities shift

Kari: I'm only one Council member. We went through the campaign or lack thereof for the Levy lid lift and it didn't go over. I hope we'll have another one early in 2027. ES will need to work together to create the same efficiencies they had before. There'll be lack of leadership. They can't self-manage, because it violates union contracts. I hope we can pass a levy as soon as February 2027 but that's unknown. If we win a levy, I'd vote to bring back the ES director. I ask the members of ES department to have faith that they can remain unified even with different supervisors. It's not ideal but it beats eliminating more positions.

Tillery: I've devoted myself to community service and I take anything I'm associated with seriously. Since Kendra has been on leave, I've been supervising the marine program. As long as I'm in a leadership position, I'll be in close contact with the staff and work to ensure the MRC and the community get what they need. Regarding capacity funding and ability to seek grants and get support from County budget, we'll address that in the budget so ES can keep doing what they're doing. We must do this to keep the County functioning, our expenses are outpacing our revenues. I apologize if I made it sound like the director position is inconsequential, we're going to do our best.

Lovel: I'll restate my question; what capacity funding remains for the ES Department's marine program?

Tillery: County manager is working through that; we're completing the budget and working with the Auditor. The team will still be able to do all the things they're doing. I don't have the details in front of me

Karin: We have heard that for over 6 months.

Lovel: I'm hearing that as they can't answer the question now, but they'll hope to have the capacity later

Olivia: I just heard you say you hope County staff can communicate more clearly with the community about environmental and sustainability issues, what will that look like? Given that folks will have different backgrounds and may not be like-minded, how will County facilitate that? And circling back to more clearly communicating to the community the need for the next levy lid lift. What will that look like to engage our community and explain why that is needed? With the communication about marine services and ensuring staff still feels like a cohesive team.

Tillery: That's up to me and the County manager, we'll make sure it happens. I speak to the marine staff every day and we have weekly check-ins. Most of what I know is what they tell me, and I trust them. I've managed communication functions of the County since May while our communications manager has been on leave. We will get that information out and work with you to make the community aware. On the levy lid lift discussion, staff needs to be careful of what we say in support or opposition. We'll work with Council on that.

Mike: a transition like this is challenging, have you considered having Kendra give each of the proposed supervisors information about their function? And how will this interact with the MRC, will all the supervisors attend MRC meetings, or will a specific staff person be designated to that role?

Tillery: If that were the case, we have measures in place to get the information we need. On the back end, there will be a designated staff. Initially I'll be in MRC meetings

Sam: The ES Director has a seat on the MRC, I'll put that on a future agenda to discuss how to restructure that

Kari K.: I want to make sure I understand what you mean by capacity funding?

Level: ES brings in funding from grants. By capacity funding I mean money from the general fund that supports components of the department's work in addition to grants. And grant funding also supports administration

Adam: I'm hearing concern about communication and ensuring that the MRC stays apprised of what's going on.

Could we help as an MRC by creating a subcommittee to get the MRC involved with those supervisors directly? I understand we're going through a hard time and need to think outside the box. We're used to having Kendra here to keep us updated and being part of discussions as an advisory committee. If we're losing that leadership, it would be helpful to still get one message from that splintered group of supervisors. That would help MRC to keep eyes on that budget and keep it on the mind of Council as things change. I'm worried things will fall through the cracks and where's the accountability to make sure future Council members will see this as a priority? How can we as an advisory committee help this group of supervisors through this transition?

Kari: I'm in favor of anything the MRC can do to help. There was no campaign for the last levy lift. I'm proposing that we have a broad-based coalition to help with the campaign for another levy lid lift. If you're paid by the County, you can't participate during work time to be on a campaign. I hope we have a rigorous and active campaign group for this next one so that we can reinstate the ES Director position and some other things. If we don't do that in 2027, 2028 will be worse.

Charles: Councilmember McVeigh, you emphasized that other departments are receiving program cuts, but the marine program specially is being held whole except for the Director position. In an organizational structure, will the ES stay a cohesive division? (YES) And Levy lid lift is one way of raising money and there are some instances in which the State has designated authority to someone at County level to raise money. Has every rock been turned over or are there some areas where Council still has some fundraising authority?

Tillery: there are a few things we've brought forward. There's a sales use tax for public safety, that's within Council's purview. It covers public safety, some environmental issues, community diversion programs for courts. That would bring in about \$800K if Council enacted it. We have a grant application for that now to include a couple of police officers and cars. But that grant program only runs for three years. There are opportunities for Council to direct some other funds toward public safety and health that could possibly free of some more general funds.

Frankie: About capacity funding, the marine program has received \$40K as part of the previous levy and that has allowed us to go after additional grants and various minutia, staff trainings etc.; that's not in the budget for next year but still working on it. It takes time and resources to bring in grants. And about the ES director position that Kendra has held – prior to 2016 all these environmental services were part of Public Works and ES established as a bona fide department in 2021. We haven't discussed with Tillery or the marine program about how that position will be held. It's about getting updates from the County and requires regional knowledge, background and understanding of relevant programs, and it's a voting position. That's something the MRC should consider

Adam: let's put it on agenda for next meeting to discuss a solution for the MRC and that communications-related position. I can try to meet with Tillery prior to that and put together a proposal for the MRC

Karin: What about a tourist tax?

Kari: Karin, Can We find some time to talk about that idea? I am pursuing some other ideas but so far none are viable. I am open to discuss all ideas!

We've updated the marine CIP to reflect three ongoing projects: Weeks Point Way, currently in permitting, hope to submit this month for construction in early 2027. We don't expect that project to take long
We have bumped out the Jackson beach restoration into further years as discussions continue. It's updated to include redesign and permitting
And the County permanent mooring buoy planning process. This is an assessment that will hopefully result in installation to protect eelgrass health. We've updated this to include funding we've received through June 2027, and we'll continue to pursue additional grant funding

10:16 AM • Planning for NWSC Conference Collaborative Networking Activity *Sam Whitridge*
As Mike mentioned, the conference scheduled for November 6 & 7th is in Port Townsend. You'll receive information and invitations; a registration deadline will be announced. The Commission will have a networking activity for MRC's to present on a topic of their choice. This year this event is happening on the first day of the conference. There'll be a round of MRC lightning presentations. Sasha at the Commission has reached out to MRC's to ask for our participation, and we'll need to decide by October what project we'd like to feature

10:19 AM • Scheduling for September MRC Meeting *Sam Whitridge*
Our next meeting will be in person on September 3rd, that's going into Labor Day weekend – is there a preference to push that back to the 10th?
Kari: the 10th is the employee appreciation picnic
Katie: there's an ECB meeting on the 10th.
Sounds like consensus is to keep it on the 3rd

10:22 AM • **MRC Subcommittee Updates**
o Outreach & Education *Katie Johnson*
We have slots open for the County Fair, MRC booth is connected to the Environmental Stewardship booth, we want it to be staffed at all times,
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1tpJAvF36hmk3ZU0_gkxOp5QwwVXXrVM020owNUqjXUw/edit?gid=0#gid=0
There's also the Green village series, Olivia & Flora & Lola on Saturday at 11am, help promote work of the MRC
And PFSS will participate in the Trashion Fashion show Sunday at 5pm

10:25 AM o Plastic Free Salish Sea *Karin Roemers-Kleven/Katie Johnson*
Katie: we wrapped up plastic-free July, Flora put out some great videos with short interviews and other clips. And mark your calendar for Sept 26th – it's the Fall Great Islands Clean Up (GICU).
Adam: will that partner with the Port and outer islands?
Katie: this is the smaller post-summer season clean up with a post at Jackson Beach

10:26 AM o Seagrass Protection *Olivia Graham/Katie Johnson*
Eelgrass stressors project has finished all its boat-based fieldwork, Frankie still has a few aerial surveys. Then moving on to analysis and hope to get a lot of great data about impacts on eelgrass health
Sandy: REU (Research Experience for Undergrads), Chrishera Smith– NSF-funded program for undergrads. Mentors are S. Wyllie-Echeverria, K. Valentine. R. Tanner, B. Finney. The title is, "Autopsy of Intertidal Eelgrass: Evaluating Sediment Characteristics at Picnic Cove Relative to Other Eelgrass Sites". We should report on her work by fall.
Frankie: we've created an "engage" page linked to MRC site with updates to the seagrass work, there will also be one for the MSA, <https://engage.sanjuancountywa.gov/managing-marine-recreation-use-for-ecosystem-recovery>

10:30 AM o Derelict Vessel Prevention *Adam Parrott/Kari Koski*

Some money from DNR is available to Tribes, we wanted to prioritize boats that couldn't be removed otherwise. Three vessels prioritized that couldn't be removed in other ways. A barge in Swinomish channel, another large vessel, and Uwillia in Jensen's Bay. Some \$80 thousand to be spent by December. The other money is being earmarked for the Makah turn-in event, and a few other groups looking to do their first turn in event in 2027, and we hope to have another one here 2028. Staying involved with marine DNR group doing creosote removal and other events as they arise, like a big net that washed up recently on Spieden.

10:35 AM o Oil Spill/ERTV

Charles Bookman

- Report on SJ County Council letter to Gov. Ferguson drafted by MRC

We acted on our plan to send a letter to Ferguson, and it's been distributed to other partners and interested parties, I hope it'll go to our congressional leaders as well. It's a complex international bilateral situation. The ports are our entire economy. It would help to make the public more aware. Friends of the San Juans have done an action alert that helped. It may also help if leaders who signed this letter would publicize it, maybe it could be distributed through local news outlets. I don't think public is aware of this broad-based problem.

Frankie: broader awareness is a great idea. It's not just about tanker traffic but also about recreational boaters and their potential to interact with these large ships, raising awareness in the boater community is important. If we're getting responses back from Tribes, I'd like to get a copy and keep on record as Cultural Resource Coordinator.

Brendan: I'm the Emergency Management Coordinator for the County. I just met recently with IOSA in Canada. I'd encourage MRC and Council to consider ways we can drill down to very specific asks. In Canada my sense about the dredging and the Transmountain expansion is that they're going to happen full speed ahead, given current geopolitical context I don't think we'll have a loud voice in Canada. But we can identify some specific asks, like the ERTV in Sidney. There are other things we could do as well, like a Gap analysis together with Tribes and Canada Level: see the 2017 PAWSA (Ports and Waterways Safety Assessment) where there was consensus on concerns about risk of accidents between commercial ships and recreational and fishing boats

Frankie: FYI. For any press-release/op ed I have some aerial photos of tankers/cargo vessels transiting through Boundary Pass.

- Update/Discussion re: U.S. Rep Larsen's oil spill preparedness efforts

Level reviews annual tanker traffic from Strait of Juan. 173 in 2023, 352 in 2024 (when Transmountain pipeline was concluded), and 528 in 2025. In 2026 the projected number is 932, that's just going to Canada. And Transmountain pipeline isn't yet at full capacity. The sooner we can respond to a spill the greater the chances of containing it, that time to response is critical. But WA state hasn't increased their capacity to respond to non-floating oils. Friends has advocated increasing those requirements but this year in the current rule-making process it's not in the scope to increase equipment, tactics, or personnel. Meanwhile, thanks to Representative Larsen, in the most recent Coast Guard reauthorization act there's a section requiring review of the update to the CanUS joint pollution response plan it needs to include evaluation and revision. There was a memo sent in April that I've submitted a request to receive it. As a condition of the Transmountain pipeline expansion, Canada updated some equipment but the challenge here in the Islands is that it's unlikely in an oil spill that Canada will send their equipment here to help. It's an unrealistic expectation in terms of a joint response.

<https://larsen.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=4236>

Kim: this heavy tar sands oil would sink below the surface, I don't know if Ecology's assessment of non-floating oils have assessed fully what would be required to recover this dilbit in the SJ's environment. I'd like to hear from Ecology about how they would actually deal with this

Level: I recommend a specific ask is an operational demonstration of best available technology to contain and recover non-floating oil in the San Juan environment. Dilbit contains 30% dilutants, mostly gas liquids. This would boil off in hours when spilled leaving heavy bitumen sinking below the water surface

FYI - Here's the most recent Ecology VEAT 2025 (Vessel Entries and Transits for Washington Waters),
<https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/2608002.pdf>

10:56 AM Committee member updates and any other business

Mike: logistics regarding the Levey lift and ask for increased funding. When would those funds be realized?

Kari: It wouldn't happen for this November, I'm hopeful for February 2027

10:59 AM **Adjourn MRC Meeting, Convene CAG Meeting**

11:00 AM Final CAG Scoring and Ranking of 2026 Salmon Recovery Funding Board Grant Proposals. *Sam Whitridge*
Sam shares screen, reviews site visits both in-person and virtual. This year represents both SRFB and PSAR funding, the latter is a projected amount that won't be confirmed until this coming Spring. Last year we received loans from two other Lead Entities that need to be repaid. Total allocation a little over \$1 million. Review of four projects that all needed to be cleared by Review Panel regardless of our ranking. They labeled two projects as 'projects of concern' (Bayhead and the eDNA project), but the Friends of the San Juans eelgrass impacts project and the Land Bank Picnic Point project were both cleared. We supported the eDNA project locally, but the Review Panel needed to see a clearer link to salmon recovery. Those two were pulled from the grant program, and we're left with two projects to rank. The ranking came out with "Removing Chronic impacts to SJC eelgrass habitat" first and the Picnic Point Conservation Easement second. TAG funding recommendations are to fully fund the Friends of San Juans' project at \$238K and to partially fund the Picnic Point fund entirely with PSAR funds that would be available next year, \$933K. The other two projects of concern on original list wouldn't receive funding

Sam suggests a motion to approve submitting the ranked list (Sam shows ranked list)

Charles: you referred to the funding for Picnic Point as partial funding. My understanding is that there's a negotiation with property owners that has not yet taken place, and we don't yet know the outcome price – is it correct to call this partial funding or is this just what we're making available for the negotiators to work with?

Sam: it's partial in the sense that this isn't fulfilling their whole ask, but you're correct. Making this award to the Land Bank makes these funds available, Land Bank will also supply some match funding. If negotiations don't go forward, there's a process by which these funds could be available for other projects within the coming four years.

Lovel: I only voted on the Land Bank project, if the motion is for the ranked list as presented I'll recuse myself.

Sam: yes, thanks for the clarification Other TAG members were recused as well with conflicts of interest, like Tina Whitman. Two other MRC/CAG members were also on the TAG, and they only score on the TAG, Beth and Joey

MOTION: Charles moves to approve the ranked list, Sandy seconds. All in favor. Lovel recused. Motion passes

Sam: thanks all, this wraps up another grant round and another sizeable contribution to salmon recovery in SJC.

11:16 AM Adjourn CAG Meeting