

Snohomish County Marine Resources Advisory Committee (MRC) Bylaws

Adopted by consensus March 20, 2002
Amended by consensus November 16, 2005
Amended by consensus January 17, 2007
Amended by consensus June 15, 2011
Amended by consensus April 18, 2018

1. Mission and Authority of the MRC

1.1 MRC Mission

The mission of the MRC, guided by sound science and the needs of the Northwest Straits marine ecosystem, is to address local marine resource issues, recommend actions to Snohomish County authorities, and build local awareness of the issues and support for actions.

1.2 Authorization for MRC

The MRC is authorized by Snohomish County Chapter 2.800 and it participates in the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative authorized by the federal government in Public Law 105-384.

2. MRC Membership

2.1 General

MRC membership is determined according to the provisions of Chapter 2.03 and Chapter 2.800 of the Snohomish County Code.

2.2 Alternates

Only appointed MRC members may participate in MRC decisions. MRC members may submit a written request to the MRC chairperson to participate through a designee. If the MRC approves the request, then the designee may participate in MRC decisions on behalf of the appointed MRC member.

2.3 *Ex Officio* Members

To improve coordination within Snohomish County, the MRC may create *ex officio* MRC member positions. *Ex officio* members will be appointed at the first regular meeting of every calendar year, or as soon as possible thereafter, for a term of one-year and may be reappointed in subsequent years. Terms will automatically expire at the end of the calendar year unless reappointed via a consensus vote of current MRC members. The *ex officio* member is expected to fully participate in discussions and to share their expertise with the MRC, but they may not participate in MRC decisions and they do not count toward the quorum. *Ex officio* members will meet the requirements of the Snohomish County Code (Chapter 2.03 SCC).

2.4 Resignation

MRC members may resign in good standing by sending a letter of resignation to the chairperson. The letter shall include reasons for resignation. The chairperson shall forward the letter to the designated Snohomish County staff lead for the MRC, who will initiate a process to fill the vacancy.

2.5 Attendance

Attendance of MRC members, staff, and visitors shall be determined by signing in during the meeting. Attendance of MRC members shall be recorded in the meeting summary as present, excused, or absent. Excused absence of MRC members shall require notice to the chairperson, vice-chairperson, or a staff member. The chairperson shall monitor attendance.

If an MRC member or designated alternate has two consecutive unexcused meeting absences, or if the member/alternate misses four consecutive meetings, the chair shall notify the member that their attendance record is unsatisfactory. If, following such notice, the member/alternate is unable to attend consistently; the MRC will consider the position vacated and the chairperson shall forward the vacancy to the designated Snohomish County staff lead for the MRC, who will initiate a process to fill the vacancy.

2.6 Elections

Elections for MRC leadership positions will be held during the first regularly scheduled meeting in each calendar year, generally in January of each year.

3. MRC Leadership

3.1 Chairperson

The MRC shall select a chairperson from the MRC membership at the first regular MRC meeting of each year, or as soon as possible thereafter. The chairperson shall be selected based on his or her ability to conduct meetings, coordinate diverse interests and issues, and communicate with staff. The selected individual shall serve as chairperson until a successor is selected.

The chairperson shall have the following duties: preside over MRC meetings, invite public comment, allow all MRC members the opportunity to speak during meetings, ensure that all issues are given reasonable consideration by the MRC, and set the meeting agenda and location. The chairperson or their designee will also present annually to County Council on the accomplishments of the MRC.

3.2 Vice-chairperson

The MRC shall nominate up to two vice-chairpersons from the membership whose appointment must be confirmed by the MRC. The vice-chairperson(s) shall serve until a new vice-chairperson is confirmed by the MRC.

The vice-chairperson(s) shall perform the duties of the chairperson at the chairperson's request or in the chairperson's absence and shall serve as assistant to the chairperson for the good of the organization.

3.3 Northwest Straits Commission Representative and Alternate

The MRC shall select one of its members to serve as its representative on the Northwest Straits Commission and another member to serve as an alternate. These appointments shall be made at the first regular MRC meeting of each year, or as soon as possible thereafter. The representative and alternate shall serve until successors are selected.

4. MRC Decision Making

4.1 Scope of MRC Decision Making

The MRC has no legislative or administrative authority, cannot set policy, and cannot direct specific actions of any organization. However, the MRC may review policies and actions that affect the marine environment and may submit recommendations to Snohomish County.

4.2 MRC Decision Making Process

Following a motion and a second by MRC members, the MRC shall consider a decision using a “modified consensus” model. All efforts will be made to reach consensus and all members will be given an opportunity to ask questions and comment. Consensus means that all members share a sense that they have reached a common resolution, and all members “are willing to live with” the decision. If full consensus cannot be reached, the chairperson may call for the issue to be put to a vote. A vote shall require a simple majority to pass with the following exceptions:

The chairperson shall be selected by consensus or two-thirds majority.

Changes to the MRC bylaws shall be decided by consensus or two-thirds majority.

4.3 Quorum

A simple majority of MRC members, not counting the *ex officio* members, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Once a quorum is established for a meeting, the requirement for a quorum is met for all subsequent actions in that meeting. Decisions or actions shall not be taken without a quorum, but discussions can take place.

4.4 Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest is defined as the possibility or appearance of possibility, and not just the actuality of a private benefit, direct or indirect, or the creation of a material personal gain or advantage to the member, family, friends or associates who hold some share of a member's loyalty. MRC members are required to abstain from any decisions that may directly or indirectly benefit themselves or create an appearance of the possibility of a conflict of interest as defined above. However, this does not prohibit an MRC member from using his or her general expertise to educate the MRC or provide general information to the MRC on a decision item. Should an MRC member be employed or contracted in some fashion on projects related directly or indirectly to MRC projects, that member will recuse themselves from any decision making about that project and this recusal will be noted in the meeting minutes. In certain cases, an MRC member may be asked to briefly leave the room for that portion of the agenda to ensure fairness and open discussion and decision making. Abstentions from discussions and voting will be noted in the meeting minutes.

5. MRC Administration

5.1 Open Public Meetings

MRC meetings are not considered formal public meetings, however all MRC meetings held in county offices shall be open to the general public and all persons shall be permitted to attend. All decisions and action shall be taken in open session. MRC retreats, picnics, or social dinners will not be considered public meetings.

5.2 Public Comment

The chairperson may invite public comment at any time during MRC meetings.

5.3 Agendas and Meeting Summaries

Requests for agenda time must be sent to the chairperson or staff at least one week prior to a meeting. The chairperson will approve the final draft agenda that will be sent to members before the meeting. Meeting summaries shall serve as the official public record of MRC decisions and activities.

5.4 Administrative Support

Snohomish County provides administrative support and staffing for the MRC. Staff shall support regular MRC meetings by organizing meeting logistics and producing and distributing agendas, meeting summaries, and other supporting documentation.

5.5. Subcommittees

The MRC will establish a minimum of three subcommittees to develop and complete MRC work plans and projects. All MRC members shall fully participate in at least one subcommittee. Subcommittees will select a chair and meet separately from the MRC Meetings. Public involvement in subcommittees is encouraged.

The MRC may create additional *ad hoc* work groups to complete specific tasks. All *ad hoc* work groups shall have clearly defined tasks to be completed within a specific timeframe. Membership of *ad hoc* work groups shall be at the invitation of the chairperson.

5.6 Revision of MRC Bylaws

The MRC shall review the effectiveness of these bylaws on an annual basis at the beginning of each year. These bylaws may be revised by the MRC following the placement of issues for consideration on a regular meeting agenda.

5.7 Official Representation of the MRC

The chairperson and vice-chairperson(s) are authorized to represent the MRC to others. Other MRC members may represent the MRC only when specifically authorized by the chairperson or vice-chairperson.