

**“GREEN SHEET”**

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<b>Meeting dates:</b>	June 6-7, 2008	<b>#7</b>
<b>Agenda item:</b>	Establishing Marine Resources Committees in coastal counties (Per SHB 2049 and Second SSB 6227) – Briefing	
<b>Staff Contact:</b>	Margen Carlson, Special Projects Policy Analyst, IRM	
<b>Presenter(s):</b>	Margen Carlson, Special Projects Policy Analyst, IRM	

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**Background:**

Marine Resources Committees (MRCs) provide the foundation for scientifically sound, locally supported marine conservation measures needed to address marine ecosystem issues within a county. In 1998, Congress authorized the creation of MRCs in the northern Puget Sound counties to provide local, broad-based, grassroots level input to the Northwest Straits Commission. In 2007, the Washington State Legislature passed Substitute House Bill 2049 which authorized MRCs in Pacific, Grays Harbor, and Wahkiakum counties, and additional financial resources were approved in 2008. Clallam and Jefferson counties may each establish a new coastal MRC in addition to existing Puget Sound MRCs. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) was directed to coordinate this effort to establish MRCs on the outer coast. Each coastal MRC will work with state, federal, local, and tribal governments to develop a collaborative process to address ocean policy issues. Washington’s “Ocean Action Plan” (December 2006) will serve as a guide for state and local ocean policy and activities.

Grays Harbor County will be the first county to establish a coastal MRC, thereby serving as a pilot from which WDFW, the other coastal counties, and other stakeholders can learn how to successfully implement coastal MRCs. The Surfrider Foundation is assisting WDFW and Grays Harbor County in encouraging and organizing stakeholder support for a coastal MRC.

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**Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:**

Does the implementation approach we are suggesting adequately balance local needs and perspective with state guidance and technical support?

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**Public involvement process used and what you learned:**

We have cooperated with Grays Harbor County in conducting two community meetings to explore the MRC concept and how it might be implemented in Grays Harbor. Attendance at the community meetings was broad and robust, and the response to the MRC model was very positive. Attendees were eager to learn more about the existing, Northwest Straits Commission MRCs, and to learn how Grays Harbor coastal issues could be addressed.

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**Action requested:**

Informational briefing. We are also interested in the Commission’s suggestions to improve or strengthen the program.

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**Draft motion language:**

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**Justification for Commission action:**

The MRCs legislation presents WDFW with an exciting opportunity to restore and conserve coastal marine resources by fostering a community-based, ground-up conservation program.

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