



Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council
January 15, 2010
Yelm School District Office
Information: 360.438.8715

Attendees:

Council Members

Ron Averill – Lewis County
Bryan Bowden – Mt. Rainier National Park
Sandra Romero – Thurston County
Chris Schutz – Pierce County SWM

Mark Thibo – WA DNR
David Troutt – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Debbie Young – Tacoma Power
* **CAC Representatives** (3)

Citizens Advisory Committee Members

Fred Michelson*
Steve Pruitt
Kayla Saville

Marjorie Smith*
Robert Smith*

Guests

Amanda Cronin – WA Water Trust
Daniel Hull – Nisqually Reach Nature Center
Mori Wallner – Partnership for Water Conservation
Michael Grilliot – WA DNR

Natalie Duncan – Partnership for Water Conservation
Mark Swartout – Thurston County
Adam Wicks-Arshack – Voyages of Rediscovery

Staff & Associated Nonprofits

Steve Craig – Nisqually River Interpretative Center Foundation
Justin Hall – Nisqually River Foundation
Don Perry – Nisqually Indian Tribe

Sara Scott – Nisqually River Council
Sheila Wilson – Nisqually River Education Project

1. Call to Order, Approval of Minutes and Agenda

David called the meeting to order at 9:06. The December meeting minutes were approved as presented, as was the agenda.

2. Water Banking in the Nisqually

Mark Swartout provided some context for Amanda Cronin's Water Banking Feasibility Study: in the late 1990's, the Legislature and governor passed 2514, the Watershed Planning Act, to improve local water management. The Nisqually Tribe became the lead agency for Nisqually. The surface water law was enacted in 1917; the groundwater law was enacted in 1945. 'Use it or lose it' is an important, but outdated, aspect of water law. Cities are

protected, as the municipal bill allows cities to maintain unutilized water rights, but this exception does not apply to agriculture. The Nisqually Basin is closed to further water appropriations unless they are mitigated, except for exempt wells. While new water rights are extremely expensive and difficult to obtain, water banking allows flexibility around a rigid and archaic water law.

3. Water Banking Feasibility Study

[Washington Water Trust](#) (WWT) is a nonprofit organization which works throughout Washington to improve and protect stream flows and water quality that benefit agriculture, fisheries and wildlife by using innovative, market-based transactions and cooperative partnerships to create balanced solutions. They have been contracted to study the feasibility of establishing a water bank in the Nisqually Watershed, with Amanda Cronin leading the project.

Amanda explained that a water bank is an intermediary that acquires or leases water from willing sellers and then holds, transfers, and exchanges water rights on behalf of willing buyers. Water banks are currently active in Yakima & Walla Walla. In the Walla Walla, the WWT purchases existing water rights with homebuilders paying WWT \$2,000 per exempt well and receiving a mitigation certificate from the WA Department of Ecology. WWT and Ecology debit the exchange at .5 acre feet for each mitigation certificate.

The Nisqually Water Banking Feasibility Study is scheduled to be complete by June. Major tasks include:

- basin orientation and key stakeholder interviews
- research of current and desired conditions
- presentation of initial findings and water banking concepts to the Nisqually Watershed Planning Unit
- development of a final report

A copy of Amanda's PowerPoint presentation is available online at www.slideshare.net/Nisqually.

Amanda can be reached at 206.675.1585 x 100 or amanda@washingtonwatertrust.org.

4. Aquatic Reserve

Daniel Hull, Executive Director of the Nisqually Reach Nature Center introduced Michael Grilliot, a DNR Hershman Policy Fellow who is working with the Aquatic Reserve program.

Daniel explained that DNR stewards 1.9 million acres of Puget Sound, which is owned by the residents of WA State. The community has the ability to step in and develop a management plan for aquatic reserve lands. At least 230 bird species utilize the Nisqually Reach area.

The Nisqually Aquatic Reserve is one of 3 currently proposed in Washington State. This process gives the community the opportunity to be involved in the protection of our aquatic resources. The Planning committee meets on March 12, May 14, and July 9. More information is available at

www.dnr.wa.gov/ResearchScience/Topics/AquaticHabitats/Pages/aqr_ac_nisquallyreach_aqr.aspx or www.nisquallyestuary.org/aquatic.htm.

- Stage 1 - Nomination & Evaluation – Started early 2009, ongoing
Outreach, public input, scientific evaluation
- Stage 2 - Planning & SEPA (*currently here*)
Management plan development, SEPA public review
- Stage 3 - Formal Decision - Fall 2010
DNR Commissioner's Decision on Adoption

Daniel is soliciting comments on this proposal. If you have feedback, or would like to be involved in this process, please contact him at ddhull@comcast.net or 360.459.0387.

Michael can be reached at michael.grilliot@dnr.wa.gov. A copy of Daniel's PowerPoint presentation is available online at www.slideshare.net/Nisqually.

It was noted that the Anderson Island has an active community association which meets monthly. More information is available at the Anderson Island Citizens Advisory Board website: www.aicab.org.

5. Citizens' Advisory Committee Reports:

- *Citizens' Advisory Committee* – Steve P reported that the group is currently focused on preparing for the upcoming Council retreat.
- *Environmental Advisory Committee* – Fred reported that the Committee didn't meet in December because many members were sick, and the group is meeting next week.
- *Economic Advisory Committee* – This committee is still in the development stages.
- *Community Advisory Committee* – Steve P reported that the group is focusing on facilitating more community forums. The Ohop forum will be reactivated, pulling in the Tanwax, Eatonville, and Mashel regions. The Graham community is currently developing a community forum, with their first meeting scheduled for January 28. The UNCF is anxious to implement the community plan and any assistance the Council we can provide them to help develop tools for sustainable community planning will be appreciated. (The Upper Nisqually Valley Community Plan is available online at www.co.pierce.wa.us/pc/services/home/property/pals/landuse/upplan.htm.)
The county planning department has taken a big hit with current budget challenges, and now has fewer resources to facilitate work with the community. David T indicated he's willing to participate if the Council supports this action, and asked to be notified of the next opportunity for assistance.

Chair Report: David T reported that the Foundation learned through Ecology that the Council and Foundation are affected by recent budget cuts, and funding for Council staff

beyond June 2010 has been eliminated. The Foundation Board and staff are exploring options for restoring the funding. One possibility under consideration is increased collaboration with [Puget Sound Partnership](#) (PSP), and other possible options may include an affiliation with the Department of Commerce, going it alone, or asking all membership agencies partner to support Council work through contributions of \$5,000 each.

Long term solutions to budget challenges will be a major focus at the NRC planning retreat. Short-term solutions are ok for now, but not sustainable in the long run.

Chris noted that there are some Pierce County funds associated with the Nisqually basin which are tied to the Basin Plan and will be available when the plan passes. There is also a funding line for education.

Justin has developed a list of potential funding possibilities; please contact him at jshall@nisquallyriver.org if you would like a copy or can provide assistance.

EPA has a series of grant releases for \$50 million in 2010 for coalition building (not capacity building). David T will be working with his staff next week to identify projects which the tribe will focus on.

Staff Report: Sara reported that she is developing materials for the Nisqually Sustainable program, and has been working closely with the Advisory Committees. Planning is underway for the 2010 NRC retreat, which will be held on Saturday March 20, from 9:30 – 3:30, at the Mineral Lake Event Center.

6. Allied Programs

Nisqually Land Trust: No report.

Nisqually River Interpretive Center Foundation: No report.

Nisqually River Education Project:

Sheila reported that students have been involved in restoration plantings at the refuge, and will be NatureMapping (<http://depts.washington.edu/natmap/>) at the refuge restoration site later this summer. The salmon carcass tossing project, a collaborative endeavor with The Evergreen State College, is underway. Puget Sound Partnership is funding ECONet (www.psp.wa.gov/econet.php), and the Foundation is managing the Thurston County ECONet funds. WQ monitoring will take place on February 25, and the Student GREEN Congress is March 19.

Sheila introduced Adam Wicks-Arshack who works with the Voyages of Rediscovery program (www.voyagesofrediscovery.com). He has been a river guide in Washington for 4 years, and provides water-based educational opportunities for students and community groups. Adam extended an invitation to the member of the Council, and associates, to join

Voyages of Rediscovery on a trip on the Nisqually on February 6. Please contact Adam at info@voyagesofrediscovery.com to RSVP or obtain more information. Adam indicated that he will be back in April to share more information about this program.

Nisqually Stream Stewards:

Don reported that the Winter 2009 edition of the Salmon Recovery Newsletter was mailed recently, the Roy Salmon Homecoming is scheduled for Saturday January 23, and he is currently recruiting participants for the 2010 Stream Stewards class.

Nisqually River Foundation:

Justin reported that he is currently representing the NRC at the Pierce County Flood Advisory meetings, and he offered the seat to any member of the Council who would be interested in participating on this committee. If no one comes forward, he is happy to remain the Council representative.

7. **Adjourn** - The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 pm.

*Next Meeting: Friday, February 19
Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge*