



Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council
November 16, 2012
Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge
Information: 360.438.8715

Attendees:

Council Members

JW Foster – *City of Yelm*
Cindy James – *WA Dept. of Ecology*
Jean Takekawa – *Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge*

David Troutt – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*
*** CAC Representatives (2)**

Citizens Advisory Committee Members

Mary Foster*
Steve Pruitt
Karelina Resnick*

Marjorie Smith
Robert Smith

Guests

Will Arnesen – *Mount Rainier National Park*
Jim Bachmeier – *Thurston County*
Nick Bond – *Town of Eatonville*
Otis Bush – *The Evergreen State College*
Chris Ellings – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*
Kim Gridley – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*
Daniel Hull – *Nisqually Reach Nature Center*

Scott McCormick – *Thurston County*
Renee Mitchell – *Pierce Conservation District*
Chris Schutz – *Pierce County*
Rene Skaggs – *Pierce Conservation District*
Stephanie Suter – *Puget Sound Partnership*
Sunny Thompson – *Owner, Wellspring Spa*

Staff & Associated Nonprofits

Desiree Andersen – *Nisqually River Ed. Project, Intern*
Justin Hall – *Nisqually River Foundation*

Christian Sartin -- *Nisqually River Ed. Project, Intern*
Ashley Von Essen – *Nisqually River Council*

1. Call to Order, Approval of Minutes and Agenda

Call to Order – David called the meeting to order at 9:47am.

Approval of Meeting Minutes and Agenda – There was a motion to approve November's meeting minutes as presented. They were approved, as was the agenda for December.

2. Introductions, Reports

Advisory Committee Reports

- *Citizens Advisory Committee* – Steve reported that an NRC Executive Meeting was held November 13th at the Nisqually Tribe's Natural Resources Office. The Executive Committee is utilized to facilitate the ongoings of the CAC and NRC, taking in consideration the future of the Nisqually River Council and the implementation of the Nisqually Watershed Stewardship Plan. At the meeting, it was decided that the CAC would look to assist the Friends of Mineral Lake in preventing parcels from being converted to residential property and subdivided, as part at DNR's Community Forest Trust Program. The CAC intends to look deeper into this project and will bring something to present to the NRC in the next few months.

David took a minute to honor the life and passing of Paul Crosetto, a CAC member, land steward, and active member of the Nisqually Watershed. Paul has done so much for the watershed, donating much of his time to promote sustainable living and preservation of forestlands. He will be greatly missed by all.

- *Chair Report* – David also mentioned the Executive Committee meeting and the group’s discussion that took place surrounding forestland protection in the Nisqually Watershed. At this point, the vision for conservation is very broad. The Executive Committee will be looking to refine the focus of the CAC and the Forest Buffer Committee, while moving forward on the projects of the NRC Forestry Committee.

David also shared that “River of Kings” has been released online, a two-part episode of “Saving the Ocean with Carl Safina” filmed for PBS. The episodes highlight many of the ongoing projects of the watershed, as well as the people behind those projects. They can be viewed at: <http://video.pbs.org/program/saving-the-ocean/>. Both episodes will be shown at the NRC’s December meeting.

- *Staff Report* – Ashley reported that she has begun work on the latest edition of the Foundation’s newsletter, the Nisqually River Notes. Look for it to hit the stands later this year.

Ashley has also been working to update and expand the Council’s website. She has added a partner resource page that includes all active members of the Nisqually River Council, as well as a calendar of watershed-wide events. She encourages everyone to send her important dates of happenings and volunteer opportunities that should be added to the calendar.

Allied Programs

- *Nisqually Land Trust* – JW shared that after 7 years, the NLT has finally completed the Mount Rainier Gateway Initiative in the upper watershed. This 2,500 acre wildlife corridor connects local, state, and federally protected lands near the main entrance to Mount Rainier. The final 250-acres were recently purchased from Hancock Timber Resource Group, the largest transaction in the Land Trust’s history.

There will be more projects in motion by years end, including the acquisition of the Burwash property, the site for Phase 2 of the Ohop Restoration.

- *Nisqually River Education Project* – Christian and Desiree reported there has been positive feedback from the teachers who participated in this fall’s water quality monitoring, which was recently made mandatory for all Yelm School fifth grade classes. Sheila is looking to apply for an EPA educational grant to help offset the costs of the expanding program.

Tree planting has reached its halfway point for the season and so far has seen 470 student participants, 77 adults, and 9 school districts. These field trips are set to conclude mid-December.

Christian reported that he has begun salmon dissection workshops in classrooms throughout the watershed. This is a relatively new program to NREP and is proving to be very popular. Christian has so far schedule dissections in 8 classrooms, with another 13 teachers to put on the calendar.

Christian and Desiree recently visited Pioneer Middle School to give a benthic macroinvertebrate presentation to one Laura Lowe’s 6th grade classes. Laura has been working to ensure that each of her 6th grade classes has the opportunity to participate in at least one NREP activity.

- *Nisqually River Foundation* – Justin reported that the 2nd Daniel J. Evans Nisqually Stewardship Award event was held on October 24th at the tribe’s Braget Farm Conference Center. The event honored Norm Dicks for his contributions to the Nisqually Watershed and entertained approximately 100 people with a light dinner. Norm, “The King,” was presented with a piece of artwork to be hung at the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge’s Visitor Center next to Billy Frank’s, the award’s first honoree. After calculating event costs and fees, the Foundation was able to raise \$38,000 in sponsorships. Norm is very interested in maintaining a connection to the Nisqually, and may even look into joining the NRF Board of Directors.

The Nisqually Tribe has signed a contract with Earth Economics to move forward into the next phase of funding watershed stewardship. Many watershed councils, including the NRC, rely upon state and federal grant sources to keep their doors open. The hope is to develop more dependable sources of funding, using staff time to further watershed projects rather than constantly searching for financial

support. With this level of funding, the Council would be able to move the NWSP into the future and further accomplish key action items.

- *Stream Stewards* – Don Perry, who was unable to make today’s meeting, left a report that he is hard at work on the latest edition of the tribe’s annual salmon recovery newsletter, Yil Me Hu. Look for it in the coming months. completing

There will be a Stream Stewards tree planting this Saturday, November 17th, at Red Salmon Slough off Mounts Road from 9am to noon. This project directly benefits band-tailed pigeons, which depend on the natural springs on site.

- *Salmon Recovery Update* – Chris reported that he has officially returned from paternity leave. In his absence, Kim has been covering the lead entity position and ensuring that salmon recovery action items are moving forward. Salmon Recovery will be looking to receive approval from the NRC next month pertaining to the Burwash and Martin acquisitions in the Ohop Valley, as well as the Litzenberger property further upstream in the spawning reach. With the size of these three projects, it will require funding to be reorganized. Kim will share further details with the Council next month.

The tribe has been implementing detailed monitoring of fish in the Ohop Valley. PIT tags are being placed in coho and steelhead par in order to reveal more information about their distinct habitat for the winter months. They will also be setting a smolt trap next year with a reader to relay differential survival information as the fish migrate out. This will allow biologists to see where these fish are actively rearing and allow them to analyze growth rates. The tribe is working with a consultant to become more familiar with the technology and processes being used on this project and in the future. More information to come, as well as a presentation to the Council on the findings of this project.

The Nisqually Salmon Recovery Program will be holding their annual post-season meeting in February to discuss the phases of salmon recovery throughout the previous year. This will allow them to take an adaptive management approach, review ongoing and processes of specific programs, and plan for the future. Meetings will begin this year with steelhead recovery.

Data from previous years has led biologists to believe that the chinook run starts in late summer and runs through the fall. Because of this evidence, the weir was put in place July 1st with all intentions of removing it in October. The first fish came very late, possibly due to the lack of rain in the region. However, fish were being seen at the fishery and the hatchery, providing enough evidence that they would soon be on their way. The tribe decided to complete a series of spawning surveys above the weir and found a record amount of fish on spawning grounds, including locations fish had not been seen before. The tribe’s diving team inspected the weir and was able to identify inefficiencies, including scour around the chain and small gaps. Between 1,000 and 1,200 fish were tagged at the weir. Positive takeaways include recognizing the resiliency and determination of the Nisqually hatchery run, as well as identifying a strong coho run in the river.

3. Agritourism in Thurston County

Scott McCormick, Associate Planner Thurston County

This past March, Thurston County adopted an agritourism ordinance that will help preserve working farmland and natural resources, boost the local economy, and provide education to the public. Other benefits would include decreasing commute time for workers, minimizing resource use, preserving cultural and local heritage, and keeping younger generations in the family business. The ordinance, two years in the making, started as a way to ensure wineries and breweries could exist in the county and has grown to include farm stores and bakeries, and distilleries. Since the idea was relatively new, organizers had to define what agritourism was, what they wanted from it, and develop a template for this new concept of zoning. Main goals of the program are to help local farmers diversify their business, create jobs, provide economic stability, preserve farmland for the future, and increase economic development. The program will focus on southern Thurston County, an area more economically depressed. This is a culminating effort on the behalf of multiple project partners including Thurston County, Olympia-Lacey-Tumwater Visitor and Convention Bureau, Washington State University Extension, and local farmers.

With the program active for only a short time, there are no statistics to report. However, since the introduction of the ordinance, its popularity has continued to increase and spread throughout the county. Permits are kept simple and inexpensive to encourage participation. County planners are working to establish a set tourist route with detailed signage to guide visitors to participating farms and vendors.

The ordinance will reopen for review within the next 6 to 9 months to accept comment from participants as well as from the general public. One such update could include participants being required to commit to using sustainable practices and utilizing restoration tactics when possible. Farmers and local business could take steps to ensure they are using the highest quality processes such as being certified as Salmon-Safe and/or Nisqually Sustainable.

4. Ecological Restoration at Mount Rainier National Park

Will Arnesen, Ecological Restoration, Mount Rainier National Park

Mount Rainier National Park's ongoing ecological restoration program works to encourage plant survival in alpine and sub-alpine zones in the park, as well as the control of exotic plants. Not only do these harsh habitats promote stress on plants, force competition, but also the presence of snow creates fragmentation and disrupts continuous forests. Plants are subject to a variety of factors that dictate growth and chance of survival, including temperature, snow cover, wind, solar radiation, topography, dry conditions, shallow soils, and parent material. Species that are present in the sub-alpine and alpine habitats are very much adapted to their environment. Plants are generally found clumped together for strength and close to rocks for increased delivery of water and protection from wind.

Harsh conditions are not the only factors effecting survival of plant species at the park. With over 2 million guests entering the park each year and many of them heading to Paradise, the park's primary visitor center, the human presence has been known to cause great devastation. Park management has attempted to introduce a number of car camping sites, a golf course in Paradise Valley, and a variety of construction projects to provide services for visitors.

Guests meandering off specified trails in search of snow and scenic beauty have also proven to produce negative impacts. Research has shown that with each footstep (sampling done with a size 10 boot), up to 20 plants can be destroyed, especially with repeated use. There are 16 official trails at Paradise, equaling 13.5 miles. Park employees have found an additional 28.8 miles of unofficial trails made by guests. Trampling to this degree could lead to loss of species, compaction of soils, and erosion and soil loss, making it difficult for plants to be reintroduced through natural seeding. To keep guests on trails, the park uses a number of rope barriers to reduce human impact. They also do their best to create off-trail resting spots and vista landings for people to use. Signs are also used regularly to ensure visitors stay in designated areas.

To restore these areas, ecologists begin by stabilizing the subsurface to guard against erosion and trail usage. Areas are then covered with rock and/or soils to match the surface of adjacent contours. All materials used are guaranteed weed-free to ensure no exotic species are introduced. Revegetation begins with seeds or cuttings taken from the site or similar sites within the park boundaries, with plants being salvaged or greenhouse grown. This assures that species are assimilated to the area. Plants are sowed in the spring and planted in September in clumps to increase chances of survival, and are watered for up to one year. Success rates are generally better than 90%, except for heather species, which are only about 20%. Costs average about \$2 per plant and \$14 per footprint.

Volunteers have been very helpful in making this operation successful. In the past year, Mount Rainier National Park has had 260 volunteers.

5. For the Good of the Order

- Jean Takekawa, Manager of the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, recently took a 2-week trip to China as part of the International Affairs Division through U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Because of the speed at which the country is growing, tremendous pressure is being placed on natural areas. The trip was used to highlight nature reserves located in the eastern China, educating their guests and asking them to evaluate current ongoings and make recommendations in the areas of management, monitoring, and education. Jean was able to give a presentation on the estuary restoration at NNWR. Not only did her talk incite interesting discussion, but inspired the idea of using dikes to control problems associated with flooding. The groups were

inspired by the Nisqually Watershed's ability to work beyond boundaries with a variety of project partners, local organizations, and community members. They had many questions about the establishment of the Nisqually River Council and have expressed interest in forming a sister relationship with the NRC, to include exchanging visits and sharing information. Jean will be sure to keep the Council informed as follow-ups are made.

- JW Foster reported that the Thurston County Solid Waste Council recently completed a report that will soon be released to Thurston County Commissioners calling for a ban on plastic bags. Largely supported in areas of Thurston County, there exist some pockets of resistance. For example, Yelm City Council is hesitant about embracing the ban from a governmental point of view. Each town will have the opportunity to choose whether they will adopt a policy and pass a correlating resolution. A series of public hearings will be held in order to hear from the public on this matter. The City of Yelm is very interested to hear public opinion, which will help them decide whether to embrace the ban. JW will inform Ashley when and where the meetings will be held and will pass the information along to council members.
- The "Dirty Weather Report," 24 hours of Climate Reality Projects created and promoted by the Al Gore team, is now available online. Visit: climateresearchproject.org/ for more details.
- Jean Takekawa and Ron Averill will be attending the December meeting at UW's Pack Forest. Join the NRC in honoring their years of participation and contribution to the Nisqually Watershed.
- The Watershed Diorama from the Nisqually Indian Tribe has been completed and delivered to the Town of Eatonville. An unveiling will take place in the spring.
- Daniel Hull delivered an update pertaining to the Nisqually Aquatic Reserve. There are currently 80 citizen stewards monitoring the reserve. There will also be some transitions taking place at the Nisqually Reach Nature Center. Doug Myers is moving to Washington D.C. and therefore will be stepping down as Board President. Mary Ann Pelter will be taking over for the next year until the position can be permanently filled.

Adjourn – Meeting was adjourned at 12:03pm.

***Next Meeting: Friday, December 21, 2012, 9:30am – 12:30pm
UW Pack Forest, Eatonville***