



**Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council
May 17, 2013
Wilcox Family Farms, Roy
Information: 360.438.8715**

Attendees:

Council Members

Bryan Bowden – *Mount Rainier National Park*
Edna Fund – *Lewis County*
Cindy James – *Department of Ecology*
Jim McCune – *Pierce County*

Renee Mitchell – *Pierce Conservation District*
Sandra Romero – *Thurston County*
David Troutt – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*
*** CAC Representatives (2)**

Citizens Advisory Committee Members

Fred Michelson
Karelina Resnick*

Marjorie Smith
Robert Smith*

Guests

Martha Arriaga – *Nisqually Middle School*
Lisa Breckenridge – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*
Amy Cruver – *Pierce County*
Rich Doesnges – *Thurston County*
Chris Ellings – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*
Lauren Gaudette – *Nisqually Middle School*
Rick Geyen – *Nisqually Middle School*
Jayden Gilmore – *Nisqually Middle School*
John Hayes – *Mount Rainier Institute/Pack Forest*

Kimberly Myers – *Nisqually Middle School*
Renee Quenneville – *Pierce County*
Dixie Reimer – *North Thurston Public Schools*
Chris Schutz – *Pierce County*
Rene Skaggs – *Pierce Conservation District*
David Stepetin – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*
Stephanie Suter – *Puget Sound Partnership*
Barb Wood – *Thurston County*

Staff & Associated Nonprofits

Justin Hall – *Nisqually River Foundation*
Don Perry – *Nisqually Stream Stewards*

Sheila Wilson – *Nisqually River Education Project*
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 9:34am.

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

2. Introductions, Reports

Advisory Committee Reports

- *Citizens Advisory Committee* – Karelina reported that the CAC has been moving forward on the Citizens Conservation Certification assessment, pulling together the “water” portion of the survey. The committee met at Karelina's home May 14th and received a presentation from David Hymel on the Town of Eatonville's Stormwater Plan and 5-year campaign outline. It is their intention to curb 100% of Eatonville's stormwater run-off, keeping it out of critical Nisqually tributaries. David has been very busy but is going to try to increase his contribution to the CAC. A draft of this plan is available upon request.
- *Chair Report* – David reported that the Tribe dedicated the 3-D diorama of the Nisqually Watershed at the Eatonville Visitor Center on Saturday, April 27th. The diorama will remain there on permanent

display, with the center opening for summer hours Memorial Day weekend. Cynthia Iyall, Tribal Chair, who spoke at the dedication, would now like to have a duplicate made for the Tribe.

David reported that he has made progress in his attempt to acquire replacement funds for those cut by the Department of Ecology. Washington State Senators Karen Fraser and Randi Becker are in full support if the Council and are working to channel resources to the Nisqually River Council. Representative John McCoy will be addressing the need to invest funds into our watersheds, as well as the need for watershed management at the May 30th legislative session. Unfortunately, due to a prior engagement, David is unable to attend. Sandra Romero, the Council's Vice Chair, will look to attend this meeting in his place. She will let Ashley know if she can make it. Justin will also plan to go to this meeting to ensure the NRC is involved in these processes. Staff will reach out to the Council if further participation is necessary.

David shared that the Department of Interior's Rebecca Wodder has officially invited the Nisqually Watershed to participate in the National Blueways Program as a pilot project. She is working to supply the NRC with funds to put together the application, ensure support capacity and plan implementation. David has had the chance to speak with Michael Linde, who has experience with the National Blueways program, and believes he could be a very helpful resource during and after the application process. He should be approached to give a presentation of his experience with the program.

The NRC has talked about the possible expansion of the Council and increasing membership at the table. David would like to nominate the Puget Sound Partnership to become a voting member because of their regular attendance, help in establishing funding and other resources, and their endeavors in the Puget Sound. Sandra has made a motion add the Puget Sound Partnership to the NRC's list of voting members. The motion passes unanimously. Congratulations to the PSP!

- *Staff Report* – Ashley reported that she has been working on the National Blueways application, compiling the necessary research and data, as well as the application to bring a full-time AmeriCorps Individual Placement member to the Foundation.

She has also been working on the next edition of the Nisqually River Notes. To ensure the edition makes it to print, it must be released by June. The grant currently on the chopping block from the Department of Ecology directly contributes to fees associated with printing and mailing the newsletter.

Ashley has also been working with the CAC to assist in the development the CCC assessment. As Karelina stated earlier, the committee is currently working on the "water" portion on the assessment. Ashley has been using the Nisqually Sustainable checklist as a template, gearing it more towards residential homeowners and renters.

Allied Programs

- *Nisqually Land Trust* – There was no report from the Land Trust at this time.
- *Nisqually River Education Project* – Sheila reported that NREP attended the Eatonville Salmon Summit, an event that brings together every 4th, 5th, and 6th grader in the Eatonville School District. She, with the help of Evergreen interns, led students in a game of "Smell Your Way Home," a game that demonstrates how salmon use their sense of smell to return to the tributaries of their birth for purposes of spawning. NREP, along with Native Plant Salvage, also had a booth at the Eatonville May Day celebration, making "Edible Aquifers" with attendees. The activity uses edible items to construct the basic design of an aquifer, sharing why it is important to keep them clean and curb stormwater run-off. These events offered ample opportunity to recruit volunteers for the June 1st raingarden clean up at Eatonville's Napa Auto Parts Store, as well as signing up students for the upcoming Stream Stewards Training Program.

Sheila recently met with Rich Doenges, Thurston County Water Resources, and Rocky Birkland, Yelm School District, to discuss potential rebates for Yelm District schools participating in stormwater

reduction programs and environmental education, as well as for maintenance and upkeep. Participation in the program could mean a rebate of up to 50% of stormwater fees returned, approximately \$8,000 per year. This program could also be connected with the Nisqually Sustainable Program, as it offers rebates to businesses as well. Salmon-Safe participants automatically get a 25% rebate.

NREP's Eye on Nature fieldtrips have already brought more than 100 students to the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge to take part in NatureMapping, sound mapping, and ethnobotany walks.

This year's Summer Teacher Institute will help educators of the Nisqually, South Sound Green, and the Chehalis Basin understand the basics associated with climate change and ocean acidification, as well as how to teach these concepts to primary school students. They will use a number of fun projects, speakers, and experiments throughout the three-day event to get their message across.

Sheila has been working with partners at the Pierce Conservation District to get a similar environmental education program in the Puyallup area.

Students from Nisqually Middle School will be here today to present their water quality data collected throughout the year at Riverbend Campground, which was also shared at this year's Student GREEN Congress.

- *Nisqually River Foundation* – Justin reported that he has been communicating with the Model Forest Policy Program's Climate Solutions University, a program that will assist the watershed in writing a climate adaptation plan. Justin is working to submit an application, however, the program needs a half-time staff person. The AmeriCorps Individual Placement would take the lead on this program, should both applications be accepted, along with providing assistance with NREP and NRC staffing.

Chris Ellings mentioned that the Tribe has cutting edge data pertaining to climate change in the watershed collected by USGS. This data could prove to be a very useful contribution and project resource.

- *Stream Stewards* – Don Perry reported that the Stream Stewards held a weekday volunteer event, Tuesday, May 7th, pulling Scotch Broom at the Braget Knowl property off Mounts Rd. Hundreds of plants were pulled from the ground that morning! Thanks to everyone who came out and participated!

Friday, May 3rd the Tribe's new 26,000 square-foot administration building had its official opening and dedication. Hundreds came to celebrate the history, tradition, and culture of the Nisqually Tribe.

The 6th Annual Honor Walk took place Sunday, May 5th, an event that pays tribute to Chief Leschi and his brother, Quimeth. This year's event brought 150 participants together to celebrate the history and culture of the Nisqually Tribe, while allowing them to tour and view what was once Nisqually land.

The Eatonville Salmon Fest Planning Committee has been meeting each month, putting together details for this first-year festival. The Town has been very involved in the process, with many participants and volunteers coming forward. The festival will take place October 19th from 10am to 3pm at Mill Pond and Smallwood Parks.

Don currently has 29 people signed up for the Stream Stewards Training Program. He has been saving a couple seats in hopes of filling them with Eatonville high school students.

- *Salmon Recovery Update* – Chris reported that much of his time this past month has been devoted to putting together over 20 budgets for salmon recovery.

Chris has also been meeting with the state's co-managers of WDFW, working out details of the Steelhead Recovery Program. This is the first step of steelhead recovery in the Nisqually watershed

and will operate as the backbone of the program. A clear sense of direction has been established and key components have been identified, which will continue to develop with future workshops.

Kim Gridley, who is currently on vacation, led the restoration project tour for this year's SRF Board round. Stephanie Suter, who was at the event, shared that the tour of the Phase 2 Ohop went very well. Scheduled to use most of this year's SRF Board funds, this project had the least amount of questions directed towards it, due to the familiarity of Phase 1. Chris added that acquiring finances to complete Ohop Phase 2 is still ongoing. By the time this project reaches completion, this project will have been funded by multiple state and federal sources, possibly resembling the restoration of the NNWR in this aspect. Renee added that there were no technical issues with the Knotweed Control Project, also up for SRF Board funds this year. She gave a presentation to the Board this past October to ensure they were up to speed with the project and the advances that have been made in eradication. The Board, which was once opposed to knotweed control programs, have been turned around by the efforts and progress made by Pierce Conservation District.

The Tribe's sampling crew has been collecting fish data using beach seine methods at near shore and river sites in and around the islands near the mouth of the Nisqually, the Aquatic Reserve, and the estuary restoration area. In their sampling, large amounts of natural chinook have been seen this year. Natural Resources has opted to participate in a toxics study being done on Puget Sound chinook, which will prove to be very important regionally and to tribal communities. This research will focus on the concentration of toxins at freshwater, estuary/rearing, and return/spawning stages, and will be included in the ongoing consumption rate levels for WA State.

Chris shared that the Tribe is also in the final phase of applying for funds through Washington Sea Grants, a very competitive program through the University of Washington. Working as a part of the Salish Sea Marine Survival Project, these funds would allow for extensive research to evaluate whether the estuary restoration is imposing limiting aspects of habitat for fish and wildlife. The study would investigate what is being eaten in the restored areas, how fish are growing, and where they're traveling. This data will be compared with regions to the north and will help in identifying patterns across the Salish Sea, pinpointing survival mechanisms.

Aaron David, a former Tribal employee and graduate student at the University of Washington, is currently studying how fish are feeding in reference and restored areas and what this means for caloric intake. This asks the question, "In the restored area, as far as calories go, is a muffin still a muffin?" This study factors in what is being eaten, outside temperatures, and metabolism to identify how much fish are eating and how fast it's being digested. Aaron has found that fish are feeding in the restored areas, at comparable rates to the control or reference sites (mature channels and habitat). This means that even as the ecosystem is revolving and changing, it is still providing for and supporting wildlife. There are talks of publishing this information in prestigious ecological journals and is something that should be presented to the NRC in the near future.

3. Thurston County In-Lieu Fee Mitigation Program

Rich Doenges, Thurston County Water Resources Program

The Thurston County In-Lieu Fee Mitigation Program is an effort supported by the Department of Ecology (DOE), which aims to ensure compensation is available for unavoidable impacts to wetlands. This is done by requiring a permittee to pay a fee to a third party, or sponsor, in-lieu of conducting project-specific mitigation or buying credits from a wetland mitigation bank. The fee charged by the ILF represents the cost of replacing the wetland functions lost or degraded as a result of the permittee's project, as calculated by the DOE. However, applicants will first work with regulatory agencies and tribes to identify ways a proposed project can avoid and/or minimize environmental impacts. (www.ecy.wa.gov/mitigation/ilf.html)

In the past, it has been found that most wetland mitigations projects have failed to offset the lost wetland function due to poor site selection, management and maintenance, poor design, and/or poor follow through by the regulatory agency. It is the goal of this project to work past these potential hardships by selecting the mitigation site in

advance using watershed characterization plans and analyses, ensuring sites are designed to address critical watershed needs caused by loss or damage. The program will also allow for smaller projects to be combined into more sustainable wetland complexes and provide long-term protection and maintenance to these sites.

The County has put together a prospectus outlining plan specifics and has made it available for public comment. It can be viewed at: www.ecy.wa.gov/mitigation/docs/ThurstonProspectus.pdf. The period for comment closes today, Friday May 17th. The next phase includes a group of representatives from local, state, federal, and tribal entities considering and incorporating feedback, while resolving issues and developing a new draft instrument. Once details are finalized, a final draft will be submitted for approval.

Thurston County will also be looking to identify and acquire an appropriate mitigation site. Site selection will be done using a watershed characterization process, recognizing areas with diverse aquatic habitat diversity, habitat connectivity, and location and availability of surface and groundwater. Also considered will be the potential of the site to receive mitigation successfully, adequate buffers for site protection, location of the site, as well as other physical and chemical characteristics. However, sites slated for restoration, especially those with intent to protect salmon with state or federal grant monies, are ineligible.

For this program to be successful, it must be financially self-sustained. Looking ahead at planned developments for the Deschutes and Nisqually Watershed, it is predicted that there will be more than enough generated income to support the program. Further financial aspects of the project will be outlined with the development of the ILF instrument. The DOE will make the final decision for the methodology of applying price tags to environmental impacts. This has proven to be a challenge in past programs because of the fact that location plays a huge factor in wetland mitigation. Sites must be selected correctly the first time to guarantee success of the project and to make certain there will be ample funding for completion.

Tribes have had the ability to participate throughout the development of the program and will continue to have every opportunity to contribute. The Nisqually Tribe is very supportive of the program and has been very involved in the process since the beginning.

Rich's presentation is available by accessing the NRC's SlideShare website at: www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/ilf-presentation-to-nisqually-river-council

4. Pierce County Watershed Health Data Website

Renee Quenneville, Pierce County Surface Water Management

Surface Water Management (SWM) collects a number of datasets associated with watershed health monitoring projects throughout the year. These include water quality monitoring of over 50 streams, shellfish monitoring, 16 active weather stations, macroinvertebrate sampling, 18 groundwater well levels, 4 County maintained pond levels, SWM Capitol Improvement project support, and National Pollution Discharge Elimination System Permit Support (NPDES). However with all this incoming data, there was no public forum in which to easily share this information with the public. A team of GIS specialists and database administrators were assigned to develop an interactive web-based data center. After verifying the need to make this data accessible, the Watershed Health Data Website was created.

The website, an online data portal, can now be accessed for real-time data in both .pdf and Excel formats. The site also offers information as to what sites are still active and what kind of data is/was collected at each. The website also lists current Water Quality Report Cards and provides links to partner and associated web resources. Though not the most intuitive program, with the directions provided on site, public feedback has been mostly positive.

Sheila mentioned that NREP has year's of water quality data that has been entered in to the EPA's STORET database. With changes to WQX, this data is no longer easily accessible. She wondered if it were possible for Pierce County to house their relevant data. Chris Schutz added that this past year's benthic collection fieldtrips were done through the County and should be added to the BIBI data on the Puget Sound Benthos website. Chris Ellings shared that the Stream Stewards collect BIBI data for the Tribe, but have yet to do anything with the data. A link from the Watershed Health Data Website to the benthos website or to specific sampling sites could be very helpful.

Pierce County is also working with Pierce Conservation District to include their data to the website as well.

The Pierce County Watershed Health Data website can be found at: www.piercecountywa.org/watershedhealthdata.

Renee's presentation has been made available on the NRC's SlideShare website at: www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/pierce-county-surface-water-management-data-portal

5. 2012-2013 Water Quality Testing at the Nisqually River

Martha Arriaga, Lauren Gaudette, Jayden Gilmore, and Kimberly Myers, Nisqually Middle School Students

As participants in the Nisqually River Education Project, 8th grade students from Nisqually Middle School have had the opportunity to collect water quality data from the mainstem of the Nisqually River. Their site for the 2012-2013 school year has been Riverbend Campground. Parameters measured include pH, dissolved oxygen, fecal coliform, turbidity, and nitrates.

pH, which measures acidity levels, was found to be 7.5 in both Fall of 2012 and Spring 2013. Optimal pH levels, lying between 7-8, are important for the survival of living organisms.

The dissolved oxygen (DO) test identifies how much oxygen is in the water, which is needed by all aquatic organisms for survival. In the Fall of 2012 DO levels were at 10.0 mg/L and 12.3 mg/L for Spring 2013. Since the ideal level of DO is 9.0 mg/L, the student's findings were slightly higher than optimal.

The fecal coliform test (FC) indicates the likely presence disease-causing bacteria. This can be leaked into waterways through the feces of both humans and animals. Fall 2012, students found 160 FC/100mL and 0 FC/mL in Spring 2013. The very high levels of FC in the fall could be attributed to a farm upstream of the campground.

Turbidity tests the amount of sediment and silt that can be found suspended in the water. High turbidity levels can make it difficult for underwater plants to survive, harm the gills of organisms, and affect the ability for juvenile fish to find prey. Levels for Fall 2012 were calculated at 21.5 JTU's and 18.33 for Spring. Optimal levels for this test lie at <20 JTU's. While Riverbend's data was round around these standards, the lower the turbidity the better.

Nitrate testing looks for nitrogen-containing compounds in the water. In freshwater, high levels of nitrogen can cause a decrease in oxygen levels, which can be detrimental to salmon and other aquatic species. Sources of nitrates include industrial wastewater, septic tanks, animal wastes, and fertilizers. The students found 1.3 mg/L in Fall and 1.0 mg/L in Spring. These numbers are right on the edge of optimal standards.

Students at NMS also had the opportunity to sample macroinvertebrates for BIBI analysis on Yelm and Lacamas Creeks. Their tallies of species diversity, as well as EPT presence, suggest that the two creeks are generally healthy tributaries. However, the undisturbed site had a higher number of insects in its sample, as well as higher number EPT's, meaning more intolerant species can survive at this site.

Levels found to be above optimum standards for Fall 2012 may be attributed to the "Fall Flush," the heavy first rain after a very dry summer, which took place the week of water testing. Ways to improve water quality at this site and throughout the watershed include: adding pet waste stations, recycling, regular monitoring throughout the year, using public or non-motorized transportation, and environmental education.

Sandra would love for the students to give this presentation to the Thurston County Board of Commissioners.

Karelina mentioned that having a student seat on the Nisqually River Council could be very beneficial for carrying on the messages and goals of the NWSP to the future generations of the watershed.

The student's presentation has been made available on the NRC's SlideShare website at: www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/nisqually-middle-school-water-quality-report

6. For the Good of the Order

Karelina asked if it would be possible for their to be community recognition or ribbon-cutting ceremonies for project completions in Eatonville. This would include the logjam additions along the Mashel River and the raingarden installations in town. Bringing attention to these sites could increase public relations in the watershed, while attracting future volunteers and stakeholders.

Adjourn – Meeting was adjourned at 11:42am.

*Next Meeting: Friday, June 21, 2013, 9:00am – 12:00pm
Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center Auditorium, Olympia*