



**Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council
July 19, 2013
UW's Pack Forest
Information: 360.438.8715**

Attendees:

Council Members

Bob Burkle – *WA Dept. Fish & Wildlife*
JW Foster – *City of Yelm*
Rene Skaggs – *Pierce Conservation District*

David Troutt – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*
*** CAC Representatives (1)**

Citizens Advisory Committee Members

Fred Michelson
Marjorie Smith

Robert Smith*

Guests

Amy Cruver – *Pierce County*
Lola Flores – *Earth Economics*
Kim Gridley – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*
John Hayes – *Mount Rainier Institute*
Chris Schutz – *Pierce County*

Tracy Stanton – *Earth Economics*
Stephanie Suter – *Puget Sound Partnership*
Terry Turner – *Trout Unlimited*
Chris van Daalen – *NW Eco-Building Guild*

Staff & Associated Nonprofits

Justin Hall – *Nisqually River Foundation*
Joe Kane – *Nisqually Land Trust*

Don Perry – *Nisqually Stream Stewards*
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 9:38am.

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

2. Introductions, Reports

Advisory Committee Reports

- *Citizens Advisory Committee* – Ashley reported that the CAC is on vacation for the summer months.
- *Chair Report* – David reported that he did not have any luck in channeling funds to the NRC from the most recent state budget. Since the NRC is no longer receiving financial support from the Department of Ecology, other opportunities will need to be sought to replace funding.

David, along with Justin, and Ashley, has been working on the application for the National Blueways System. However, it has come to his attention that Sally Jewell, Secretary of the Interior, has put the program on hold for reassessment. This could be a direct result of the White River Watershed of Arkansas, the second pilot watershed to be designated, asking to be withdrawn from the program for various reasons. David wishes to communicate with his contacts at the DOI for further information, as well as express the interest of the NRC in pursuing this program. He hopes that this hold is merely temporary and that this time will allow the program to realign with the goals of the DOI before being reinstated. A letter to be sent to the Interior has been drafted, showing the support of the NRC and its members. David has asked members to submit any edits, comments, or concerns to Justin. David is looking for support from the Council to pursue discussions to move forward with the involvement of

the National Blueways System. The NRC is supportive of David's efforts. Stephanie offered that if the program aligns with the Puget Sound Recovery Caucus that information could be added to the letter.

Tracy Stanton mentioned that she has been involved in the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, a program much like the National Blueways, which looks to align urban watersheds. This program could also prove to be very beneficial for the Nisqually Watershed. More information can be found at www.urbanwaters.gov.

- *Staff Report* – Ashley reported that the latest edition of the Nisqually River Notes is now available. With the changes in funding, this could be the last newsletter to be mailed out by the Foundation. To keep the publication moving forward, the NRF will look to transition into releasing an e-newsletter instead.

Ashley mentioned that the Nisqually Watershed Festival, which takes place the last Saturday in September, will be looking to draw in new volunteers this year. The Friends of NNWR have been filling many of the slots each year and are looking to take a bit of a break. This year's pool has increased to include volunteers from the Nisqually Land Trust, the Nisqually Reserve's Citizens Stewardship Committee, and the Tribe's Nisqually Stream Stewards. All volunteers who sign up in advance and complete a 2-hour shift will be treated to lunch. Anyone interested should contact Michael Schramm, the event's Volunteer Coordinator, at: michael_schramm@fws.gov.

Ashley has been working with a small committee to revamp the NRC's Nisqually Sustainable program. The goal is to make the program more beneficial for the participants, asking the question "what's in for them?" The team hopes to host workshops for participants, as well as continuing to offer technical support and advertising. Joe mentioned the Scenic Byway Project and whether the two programs may have some potential connection.

Allied Programs

- *Nisqually Land Trust* – Joe reported that there was a major win for Nisqually with the announcement of the State's new budget. The Legislature has earmarked the McKenna Ranch Project for future funding along with 12 other regional capitol projects, as well as base funding for individual watersheds. This includes the funding slated for the second phase of the Ohop Restoration.

The Nisqually Land Trust Board of Directors met last night. The agenda included reviewing a Bill of Sale that has been written for purchase of the Martin House, a property in the Ohop Valley. The plan is to demolish all structures and incorporate the parcel into the restoration project zone.

The Land Trust is excited to welcome two new members to their Board of Directors, Tom Ginsburg and Emiliano Perez. These two men will bring great things to organization. Congratulations to them both!

The NLT is currently holding 3 of the top 5 positions in the running for funding from Pierce Conservation Futures (PCF) and has the top project for funding from Thurston Conservation Futures (TCF). This could mean \$7 million of financial support for the watershed. However, ranking for PCF funding has only been completed by the advisory committee and has not yet been approved by the Pierce County Council. David Troutt inquired whether it would be helpful for the NRC to submit a letter of support to the Council. The NRC will look to pen a letter over the next couple of weeks, circulating it to Council members for approval.

The NLT led a nature walk on the Van Eaton property this past weekend. These walks allow the public to view critical habitat areas and hear why they are declared as such, along with highlighting restoration efforts. There are still a handful of walks left throughout the summer. Those interested should contact Sheila Jackson for more information and to reserve a spot on one of these adventures.

The Mount Rainier Scenic Byways program is currently on hold due to the busy season on the mountain.

- *Nisqually River Education Project* – Justin reported that Sheila is also on summer vacation.
- *Nisqually River Foundation* – Justin reported that funding is intact for Sheila, Justin, and Ashley through the end of this year and into half of next. Project funding is sufficient, but base staffing will need to be replaced.

The Ecosystem Services Planning Team has been working with the City of Olympia to acquire a property in need of protection near Lake St. Clair. On this parcel sits the wellhead for Olympia's drinking water supply. Owners of this property are looking to do some heavy logging in this area, leading to diminished tree cover and potential degradation of the wellhead. Olympia has recently decided they can no longer allocate money towards this project due to a number of reasons, allowing the cuttings to move forward. It is possible, however, that they may be willing work with the Tribe on this matter.

Justin has been working on grant reporting for state funding that has been channeled through the Foundation. Reports for the Department of Ecology and ALEA are due this month.

The Ecosystem Services Sub-committee will be working to flush out project goals indicated by the Nisqually Watershed Stewardship Plan (NWSP). The group will meet every other Tuesday morning, beginning July 30th from 10am to noon. Justin will be creating a schedule for tackling the NWSP's long list of indicators. Invitations will be sent out to those who may have expertise in particular fields being covered at meetings. Once goals have been outlined, they will be ranked in order of priority and overall project cost. It is hoped that this will assist the NRC and NRF in being more proactive when accomplishing tasks. Justin will report monthly to the NRC on all meeting topics and discussions for feedback.

- *Stream Stewards* – Don Perry reported that much of his attention has been focused on this year's Stream Stewards Training Course. The graduation ceremony and salmon BBQ takes place tomorrow, July 20th, at the Ohop Grange. Don is very proud to report that this class of graduates has been a very diverse group, including 3 Eatonville HS students that will be earning college credit through SPSCC.

Don has also been leading 16 students in the Nisqually Salmon Camp, a component of the Tribe's Summer Youth Program. These students are given the opportunity to learn from local watershed professionals, completing number of activities and service-learning projects, which culminates with Canoe Journey each year. For their work, students will be receiving continuing college credit through the NW Indian College. Data collected in the field by students will be housed in a database to be used for salmon recovery efforts.

There will be a number of upcoming workshops for Stream Stewards, as well as the public, including Salmon Watcher workshops and benthic macroinvertebrate collections. There will also be volunteer opportunities at the Nisqually Watershed Festival and the Eatonville Salmon Fest.

- *Salmon Recovery Update* – Kim reported that the SRFB Technical Review Team, along members of the Habitat Work Group, took a tour of the McKenna Ranch Project last week. The technical team was very impressed. With the outcome of the State's budget, \$3.5 million has been earmarked for this project, however an application process will still need to be completed. It is believed that they will have an answer by December of this year, with hopes of pursuing this project as early as next year.

The second phase of the Ohop Restoration has been officially approved and funding has been solidified. Design for the project is set to begin in August, with construction to commence this time next year.

With the announcement of the State's budget for the new biennium, projects such as those listed above have become possible. However with the increase in funding, there will be a need to increase capacity as well. The uses of these capacity funds must be associated with capitol projects, but there is room for a little flexibility. If a connection can be made, this could mean financial support for the NRC with any superfluous funds.

Kim has been working with Stephanie Suter on the Nisqually Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan. This project uses specific software to create logic models from various data. Stephanie will communicate with Ashley to establish a time when someone from the PSP can present information on this project to the NRC.

Chris was unable to be here today because of his involvement in the hiring process for a biologist for the Nisqually River Weir Project. Over the course of the last week, a team has been working to install the weir, placing traps on both sides of the river, and could be fishing as of today. Over the past couple of years, there has been a number of changes and updates to the project. This year, Go Pro cameras and divers from the Tribe's Aquatic Technologies Program have been utilized to ensure no holes are present for fish to escape. A year for pink salmon, the forecast has been set at 750,000, which are expected to show up the 2nd or 3rd week of August. The presence of this many fish at the weir will prove to be a major challenge. Even if only half the forecasted amount show up, it will still be 4 times more than ever recorded. The Salmon Recovery Program is hopeful that the population increases of both pink and chum salmon are a sign of improved watershed health, and other species, such as chinook and steelhead, will soon follow. Because of the extraordinary number of fish to return to the river, recreational fishing limits have also been greatly increased. Pink salmon are not incredibly valuable for the Tribe, due to the low price attached to their meat, around 3 cents/pound.

3. **Developing New Funding Mechanisms in the Nisqually Watershed, Part 2**

Tracy Stanton and Lola Flores, Earth Economics

Tracy and Lola are here today to present the funding mechanisms that could be the most beneficial in the Nisqually Watershed. However, the news concerning the legislative budget and the City of Olympia's involvement with the Ecosystem Services Planning Team will definitely have an influence on these mechanisms.

In 2009, Earth Economics was asked to do an appraisal on the Nisqually Watershed, allowing them to discover services offered in the watershed and which of those services could act as funding mechanisms. Over the course of a year, Earth Economics searched from source to sea, across 18 land cover types, to develop a list of 12 ecosystem services. A full report has been released on this analysis. Their research showed that the watershed's potential annual benefits lay between \$280 million and \$4.1 billion, a number deemed rather conservative. Valuation is not a perfect science, but methodology calculations are assigned to each specific service. Over the past 10 years, these calculations have become more credible, as well as ecosystem services have become a more popular option for alternative funding.

Tracy has brought with her a list of 5 mechanisms for the NRC to consider. From these 5, it is hoped that the Council will select the top three to be eventually implemented, one if which to be in place within the next year. Those chosen have been selected based on information provided to Earth Economics by the Ecosystem Services Sub-committee.

Potential Funding Mechanisms Include:

1. **Watershed Protection Fee (Driven by Water Utility)**
A fee or surcharge would be attached to a utility bill (either a flat fee and/or % rate charge) and is then transferred to the watershed for investment. Fee would be applied through the City of Olympia. Those receiving the bill will always have the option to opt-out of these charges. Studies show about 30% will opt out, leaving 70% of a previously untapped income.
2. **Watershed Stewardship Fee (Collected upon entrance to Mount Rainier National Park and Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge)**
Fees are then reinvested into the watershed.

3. **Watershed Investment District (WID)**
This idea has seen a lot of traction in the Nisqually and in the legislature. This would include the development of a government structure that would change the way funds are allocated across the watershed. The legislature is currently looking to pass a study bill and is in need of a pilot project to take on this program. Rep. McCoy from Tulalip, has been scheduling a number of meetings over the summer to look into the details of developing this program. It aims to eliminate competition between watersheds, counties and specific programs, allowing funding to be spread evenly across watersheds without boundaries. There is a good chance something like this will move forward. The Green River of WRIA-9 is first in line to be selected as a pilot program, with the Nisqually in a close 2nd.
4. **Special Assessments (tax)**
This tax could be applied in a number of ways, including per parcel, per value or per septic system. Something like this could contribute \$1.2 million to the watershed for restoration of other projects. Joe mentioned that Nisqually should look into taxing TIMO's and other commercial foresters in the watershed.
5. **Voluntary Offset Fund**
Voluntary Carbon Offsets are used for biodiversity, stormwater, or water-use offsets. Utilizing this mechanism will allow Nisqually to engage large institution players in the watershed, asking them to offset their carbon footprint. Potential players could include JBLM and Tacoma Power. This voluntary program would ask organizations to go above and beyond current regulation standards. This could be a very challenging effort, especially at this time, and one that has been attempted before. However, working on a marketing campaign with large corporations, such as Wal-Mart or Cabela's, could be more accomplishable. David Troutt will be sitting down with JBLM to discuss a stormwater plan/NPDES and will mention this idea. It is believed that getting key players to reduce their carbon footprint would be more effective if working with the legislature from a policy standpoint.

The 5 mechanisms listed above have been posted on charts around the room. Each attendee is asked to look at the potential funding mechanisms and evaluate them using the criteria listed below.

- Equity/fairness
- Adequacy to generate sufficient revenue
- Political feasibility
- Meets outreach and educational goals
- Can be implemented after one year

David Troutt mentioned that he would like to see funding mechanisms that would engage other watersheds, other regions, and even other countries. He believes it may not be possible to continue funding projects and meeting long-term goals if only focusing on the local level. How do we engage others outside of the watershed and generate an income from those visiting?

Other potential ideas:

- A 1% tax to lodging, food services—an opt-out service.
- What about taxing commercial timberland organizations?
- Community give back/corporate stewardship programs through large corporations in and around the watershed?
- It was mentioned that some of the funding mechanisms listed might take too long to generate income for the watershed. The need for these funds is here now. What can be done while progress is being made on these funding mechanisms?

Earth Economics will get back to the NRC on the results of the stakeholder engagement portion of the workshop.

This workshop has been made available on the NRC's SlideShare Website. To access, visit:
<http://www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/ecosyste>

4. For the Good of the Order

Fred would like to hear more about the research being implemented by the Tribe's Natural Resource Department. He is very interested in the projects being pursued and the data that is generated from this research. Ashley shared that a presentation from Aaron David, a graduate student from UW working with the Tribe, has been added to the September agenda and will inform the group on research surrounding the NNWR estuary restoration project. David Troutt offered that presentations could be requested from Chris Ellings and Sayre Hodgeson pertaining to other salmon recovery efforts, giving reports at the end of each season. A dye injection study is taking place next week to monitor the health of beaches near JBLM. David will ask Maragaret to give the NRC an update after the project has been completed.

The RAMROD (Riding Around Mount Rainier in One Day) biking event will be taking place on the mountain July 25th.

Adjourn – Meeting was adjourned at 12:33pm.

*Next Meeting: Friday, August 16, 2013, 9:30am – 12:30pm
Longmire Community Center, Mount Rainier National Park*