



**Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council
May 16, 2014
Ashford Fire Station
Information: 360.438.8715**

Attendees:

Council Members

Roger Andrascik – Mount Rainier National Park
Bob Burkle – WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
Edna Fund – Lewis County
Donovan Gray – WA Dept. of Ecology

Sandra Romero – Thurston County
Stephanie Suter – Puget Sound Partnership
David Troutt – Nisqually Indian Tribe
* CAC Representatives (2)

Citizens Advisory Committee Members

Phyllis Farrell
Mary Foster
Ed Kenney

Fred Michelson
Karelina Resnick

Guests

John Collins – Pierce County
Chris Ellings – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Katie Foster – Columbia Crest Elementary
JW Foster – City of Yelm
Layne Fry – Columbia Crest Elementary
Ed Fund – Lewis County Resident
Nina Hiatt – Columbia Crest Elementary

Kathy Johnstone – Columbia Crest Elementary
Allison Osterberg – Thurston County
Colton Powell – Columbia Crest Elementary
Chris Schutz – Pierce County
David Stepetin – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Ashley Von Essen – Nisqually Indian Tribe

Staff & Associated Nonprofits

Morgan Greene – Nisqually River Foundation
Justin Hall – Nisqually River Foundation

Sheila Wilson – Nisqually River Ed. Project

1. Call to Order, Approval of Minutes and Agenda, Introductions

Call to Order – David Troutt called the meeting to order at 9:42am. David Stepetin led the group through a remembrance of Billy Frank Jr.

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

2. Reports

Advisory Committee Reports

- *Citizens Advisory Committee* – Steve was unable to attend the meeting, so Fred offered the report. The last CAC meeting generated a lot of discussion regarding the monthly NWSP indicator, Culture and Arts. This topic has a lot of potential for CAC involvement, because they could bridge the gap between the NRC and local residents. For example, the Citizens Conservation Certificate helps to foster a sense of watershed belonging. However, the CAC feels it is important to better understand the farmers markets, heritage facilities and other cultural locations; the NRC website could become a useful tool. The CAC would like to see each NWSP indicator have its own webpage or hyperlinks that lead to more information. To get this done, the CAC is asking the Council to increase the staff time available for updating the website. Morgan would be the obvious choice in updating the website, but it depends on her schedule and the funding.

At the meeting, prairie ecosystems were again in the spotlight. Fred noted that the CAC is motivated to learn more about prairie ecosystems: They are an important piece of the land, but knowledge is lacking. To

reflect their importance, the CAC would like to update the language regarding prairies in the NWSP. Right now, the language doesn't truly relate the full importance of the prairies.

The CAC is also concerned with certain NRC representatives that no longer attend meetings. The CAC would like the River Council to establish an Executive Committee meeting to discuss how to contact those agencies that no longer have a presence at the meetings. Many of the agencies will be important in implementing NRC projects, including the NWSP. Sheila mentioned that this has been an action the NRF wants to take on too. She has a draft phone script; NRF and CAC could collaborate together. The challenge will be discovering the names of new people within each agency.

The last topic revolved around neonicotinoids and bees. A year ago, Thurston County Commissioners sent a letter to the WA DNR requesting action be taken to regulate the chemicals. The reply letter contained several recommended actions; now, the CAC would like an update on the progress. The CAC would like to draft a letter requesting those updates, to be reviewed first by NRC. David suggested that staff could start drafting the letter, and then be reviewed by the CAC later. David Stepetin added that both the importance of honey on health and in the negative impacts of pesticides on honeybees would be a great educational topic for school groups. Perhaps students could hold a letter writing campaign, too. Sandra suggested watching "More Than Honey." After more people view the film, it would be beneficial to have a further discussion, because it is truly an important topic.

Phyllis added that the CAC also talked about cloudiness in Murray Creek. Steve and Morgan will be meeting with Miles Sand and Gravel to talk about regulations and monitoring. There will be further discussion in the future.

- *Chair Report* – Last month, David travelled with Sandra on her monthly coffee chats; good crowds and engaging conversation led to a great day! He spoke about salmon recovery in the watershed.

Last Monday, David also went to the North Pacific Migratory Fish Council, a multi-national fish council with countries including Russia, Canada, Japan and many more. The main focus was banning drift nets, and helping to target their enforcement efforts depending on fish ecology. David's presentation revolved around the watershed-wide management approach in the Nisqually.

Finally, David shared that each NRC member should be receiving an invitation to the NNWR Visitor's Center Building dedication on June 6th. Glynnis will be sending out invitations soon.

- *Staff Report* – Morgan has been busy working on the CAP. Two weeks ago, she hosted a meeting where team members pieced together a very rough draft of prioritized forest risks. In general, threats related to population growth will likely have the most negative impacts on forest resources. However, climate related threats may have very serious implications for socioeconomics. This prioritization was the first step in beginning to identify where solutions, funding and time should be focused. The next meeting, on May 19th, will start to brainstorm potential solutions.

Allied Programs

- *Nisqually Land Trust* – Joe was unavailable, so JW offered a report. The bad news: the Schorno Property (or the McKenna Reach Property) fell through. The family decided to hold on to it for personal reasons. It ended up costing NLT about \$30,000 in staff time through the years of work on it. On a brighter note, the family is still interested in preserving the land. The good news: the annual auction was a success! The fundraising goal was \$70,000; they made just shy of \$100,000.

Chris added that NLT recently received funding for the next phase of Ohop Restoration; construction will start this summer.

In Joe's absence, Justin shared information on two properties that could potentially be added to the Community Forest Initiative. There is a grant that would provide money to purchase the parcels; Joe would like the NRC to write two letters of support. A motion was approved to draft two letters of support; the letters will be sent to the entire Council.

- *Nisqually River Education Project* – Sheila is excited to get poster contest entries for the NWF. There are instructions on the website for sending in the posters, and it is open to all students, in or out of the watershed. Winners will get gift cards!

The first two rain-garden cells have been completed at Eatonville High School. They look great! Thank you to the high school students and Native Plant Salvage Project for the help. In other news, there are a few Eye on Nature trips left at the Refuge. Sheila will also be travelling to different science fairs in the coming weeks, including one at Columbia Crest and one in Graham. Additionally, the Summer Teacher Institute is beginning to fill up; 25% of the slots are already taken. This summer's schedule includes three field trips.

Lastly, Sheila shared that NRF is now acting as the fiscal agent for the "P.S., I Love You" event in downtown Olympia on June 14th.

- *Nisqually River Foundation* – Over the last month, there has been a lot of work on the Nisqually Community Forest program. The group is looking at 2-3 sections in the upper Busy Wild (near the headwaters of the S. Fork of Busy Wild Creek) that are currently owned by Hancock Timber and are critical for steelhead. They are slated for harvest this summer, but Hancock is a willing seller. The parcels total about 2,000 acres of land; overall, it would be a cost of about \$8 million. The hope is that PSAR will be able to help with the funding, but other financing options are available too. The dates of the purchase are still in the air.

In other news, the first PNW Community Forest Meeting was held a few weeks ago. Topics covered included funding sources, management and much more. Although it was the first one, community forest initiatives are becoming more prevalent; future meetings will likely be held.

Other than that, Justin has been working to contract with the Tribe to receive funding for many of the implementation projects.

- *Stream Stewards* – Don was unable to attend today's meeting. He will have a longer report to share at the June meeting.
- *Salmon Recovery Update* – Chris shared that it has been a crazy month. To start, the Salmon Recovery Staff went to the Salish Sea Recovery Conference, a biennial conference in Seattle that revolves around the Salish Sea Recover efforts. Nisqually restoration examples were everywhere!

The staff is also completing zooplankton surveys in the Nisqually Reach and Dana Passage in order to profile zooplankton communities in a cross section of the deepest part of the area. This is part of a bigger monitoring project within the Salish Sea both in the U.S. and British Columbia. The goal is to develop indexes based on invertebrate communities; near the Columbia River similar indexes relate to climate changes, salmon runs and more. It is new project for this area but will provide important information about migratory fish.

In addition, many Nisqually Steelhead are now tagged with acoustic transmitters, to assist in understanding survival rates through the Salish Sea. Some Puget Sound seals also have tags and receivers on them; when seals approach tagged Nisqually fish, it is possible to track predator/prey interactions.

Chris also shared that the plant crew has been busy with planting and monitoring projects. The crew is learning about the impacts of pesticides on bees; they do not use chemicals that are harmful to the insects.

The next Ohop Restoration Phase will begin in mid-June. It is the biggest phase to date and has been an incredible fundraising effort between the Tribe, Nisqually Land Trust and South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group—there are about 7-8 different sources of funding already. The Tribe will conduct some time-lapse photography during the effort, and is considering flying overhead too, either with a LiDAR equipped drone or a plane. Karelina suggested hosting an Ohop Restoration Celebration with the

press, partners and residents. It would be fun to celebrate the progress and to educate others about all the work.

The monitoring and adaptive management program has been going very well too. The Draft Final Report should be ready at the end of May. When it is completed, it will be distributed to the NRC. The South Sound version will be completed by then, too.

Chris also shared the Nisqually Annual Program Review will be held on May 28th at the Refuge. The event will discuss the Tribe's adaptive management program and will include presentations and a 2013 Year-in-Review. Items to be discussed include goals, harvests, hatchery rates, and actual outcomes. A representative from the NOAA science center will also speak about steelhead in Puget Sound.

Ashley reported on the annual update of the Nisqually Salmon Recovery 3 Year Work Plan & Project List. One of the biggest changes has been to utilize the Miradi Software, a program that considers physical features and impairments of the watershed. With the use of Miradi, it is easier to track strategies, which are all identified in the Work Plan. Updates to non-habitat actions include:

- Steelhead survival PIT Tague Study
- Muck Creek Hydrology Study
- Further development and management of the Nisqually Chinook Recovery Plan and the Nisqually Steelhead Recovery Plan via Ecosystem Diagnosis and Treatment (EDT) Habitat Modeling

Proposed projects include:

- 2014 SRFB Projects
 - 2 Ohop acquisitions (Upper Ohop and Middle Ohop)
 - Nisqually Knotweed Project
 - Wilcox Farms dike removal and restoration
- 2015-17 PSAR Large Capital Project
 - Busy Wild Protect and Restoration

The changes to the work plan were approved. Stephanie Suter abstained from the vote due to conflict of interest. Ashley will be turning the Plan into the Puget Sound Partnership shortly; it is due May 31. There is a site visit scheduled for June 4th.

3. Pierce County Annual Surface Water Workplan and Water Quality Report Card

John Collins, Pierce County Storm Water Management, Water Quality Supervisor

John spoke on two topics: Pierce County's annual Surface Water Workplan and the 2013 Water Quality Report Card. First, he offered details on public comment to the 2014 Storm Water Management Program Plan. The chance to provide comments ends next week. Pierce County's website provides a direct link to providing comment. The link can be found at: <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/index.aspx?NID=1855>

John also shared the Pierce County annual Surface Water Health Report Card. This is an annual report that measures the water quality of over 60 streams in the county, including a number in the Nisqually Watershed. The Nisqually received a "C" grade this year, as did a number of others. John did note that although the grade seems low, conditions in water quality are remaining static. Other sites, in contrast, are declining. Fred remembered a similar report a few months ago, for the 2012 findings. This current Report Card covers the 2013 results.

Chris Ellings wondered if there could be an opportunity to expand the report card grading to capture other important watershed areas. Several of the most important tributaries in the watershed, like the Mashel and Ohop, are not monitored at all. David suggested meeting with the Executive Committee to discuss ways to become more involved with the Pierce County Storm Water Management Program to make efforts overlap. Sheila added that NREP conducts their own monitoring on the Mashel and Ohop.

Karelina mentioned that Eatonville has been installing rain gardens to control stormwater runoff. She wondered if enough water quality testing is occurring to verify the impacts of these gardens. John explained that the testing required would be very difficult to measure. Chris added that measuring impacts may be easier than it seems: Lynch Creek is the main output into the Mashel, and is entirely forested, except once it enters Eatonville. Since the remainder of the creek contains healthy riparian zones, sediment output into the creek may be linked to Eatonville's

stormwater runoff. Perhaps monitoring could be completed upstream and downstream of Eatonville to test that theory.

4. NWSP Discussion – Culture and Arts

Today's NWSP topic is Culture and Arts. There are five relevant indicators, which deal with local food sources, artisan communities, heritage facilities, watershed festivals and a sense of a local community. Morgan has been continuing her research in establishing a baseline inventory of these indicators.

- **Farmers Markets:** For a list of local farmers markets, please refer to March's community wellness update. Since, then Morgan has spoken to Lucas Pezak of WSU Extension Office, who provided valuable information about local farmers. In particular, he shared that a majority of farmers would ideally like to sell their products locally. In addition, many farmers rely on word-of-mouth advertising. This could be a great opportunity for NRC to connect local buyers with local sellers. There are a number of existing mapping tools; perhaps these tools could be added to the NRC website.
- **Heritage Facilities:** A number of mapping services exist that identify the locations of all heritage facilities. This includes historic buildings, farms, and more. However, listing as a heritage facility does not ensure protection in any way.
- **Watershed Festivals:** Each community has a range of festivals, and could provide a chance for NRC or the CAC to become more involved. Chris mentioned the Education Coordinator of Taylor Shellfish is opening up a new location and is looking for displays and information. They would love to have something on the Nisqually Salmon Recovery efforts. Sandra Romero is trying very hard to connect the County Fair with the local farmers; she thinks this would be a great opportunity for NRC to present. Sheila mentioned that this is a great chance to increase the Nisqually Sustainable program.
- **Artisan Communities:** nothing to report at this time
- **Sense of local community:** There are a few organizations and projects that work to connect people across the watershed. Many examples are projects of the NRC itself, including Nisqually Stream Stewards and NREP.

5. Water Quality Monitoring Report

Katie Foster, Layne Fry, Nina Hiatt and Colton Powell, Columbia Crest Elementary School students

The River Council was lucky enough to have several 6th grade students from Columbia Crest Elementary School present their water quality findings. For several of the students, this was their second time testing the water quality!

Columbia Crest has been monitoring water quality for over 20 years. It has been a great chance to monitoring changes in the river, both positive and negative. It's also a great chance for students to get into the field and become a citizen scientist. Teacher Kathy Johnstone shared a story about a past student who is now becoming an environmental educator, because of the water quality monitoring experience. She is grateful to NREP for teaching students that science isn't just a subject – it's something you do.

The class tested water on the Nisqually at Tahoma Woods, a site located near their school. There, the river is sandy, rocky and has large woody debris. The riparian area is forested, and the river is braided. The group also noticed large numbers of wildlife. The data the students collected suggests a healthy river system: all of the parameters tested were within the optimal levels. For example, dissolved oxygen was very high, fecal coliform was zero, and the water temperature was low. All these qualities make for good salmon habitat.

Working with NREP has offered the students many unique experiences. Some of the highlights included working with chemicals during water quality monitoring and attending the Student GREEN Congress in March. Already, the students are planning on entering the environmental field, and have been busy teaching their families more about the environment.

6. For the Good of the Order

Justin wanted to share a piece by William Ruckelhouse about Billy Frank. Billy was compared to Nelson Mandela, a man who chose to express love and forgiveness instead of bitterness, despite enduring years of oppression. Because of Billy, the Nisqually Watershed thrives and connects a vast amount of partners. He strengthened the Nisqually Tribe, started the Nisqually River Council and truly was a legend. The entire council is grateful to have known Billy, and he will be greatly missed.

Sandra wanted to ensure the NRC was aware of a program at Joint Base Lewis-McChord designed to increase the base's awareness of what role they play in the local communities. JBLM in particular is concerned about zoning and encroachment on landing zones. Sandra suggested the NRC has a voice in the land use planning. Morgan will connect with Sandra to get the contact information.

Chris Schutz also shared that the Nisqually Basin Plan passed a few weeks ago. Currently, she is unaware of what final changes were made. It might have implications on how the River Council can move forward, based on changes to funding.

Roger mentioned that although Mount Rainier's road construction through the Nisqually Entrance is slow, there are other entrances. Don't let the delays diminish your expectations!

Adjourn – Meeting was adjourned at 12:29pm.

Next Meeting: Friday, June 20, 2014, 9:30am – 12:30pm @ Ohop Grange