



Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council Meeting
December 16, 2016
Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually NWR
Information: 360.438.8715

Attendees:

Council Members

Darric Lowery – *WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife*
Amber Moore – *Puget Sound Partnership*
Sandra Romero – *Thurston County*

Rene' Skaggs – *Pierce Conservation District*
David Troutt – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*
* **CAC Representatives (2)**

Citizens Advisory Committee Members

Phyllis Farrell*
Bob Smith

Marjorie Smith
Lois Ward*

Guests

Roger Andrascik – *Nisq. Stream Stewards/Land Trust*
Jeff Barney – *Pierce County*
Matt Curtis – *WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife*
Chris Ellings – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*

Martin McCallum – *Nisqually Land Trust, SPSSEG*
Curtis McFeron – *NOAA*
Peter Thermos – *NW Stewardship Council*
George Walter – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*

Staff & Associated Nonprofits

Morgan Greene – *Nisqually River Council*
Justin Hall – *Nisqually River Foundation*
Daniel Hull – *Nisqually Reach Nature Center*

Joe Kane – *Nisqually Land Trust*
Sheila Wilson – *Nisqually River Ed. Project*

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

Call to Order – David called the meeting to order at 9:16 am.

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

2. Reports

Advisory Committee Reports

- *Citizens Advisory Committee* – The CAC has had guest speakers at their recent meetings: Bill Van Buskirk (Yelm Wastewater Plant) spoke about changes to be made at the plant, and Marless Blackbird attended this week to speak about fracking sands transported through the Port of Olympia. CAC members enjoyed the November NRC meeting, and are interested in learning more about implications that the recent Hirst Water Case will have in rural Thurston/Pierce County. Lois reported that Fred is recovering well, and plans to return to meetings in January.
- *Chair Report* – Justin and David hosted a tour of the Nisqually Watershed with JT Wilcox and Shelly Short, two Republican representatives. The goal was to highlight successes in the Nisqually Watershed—including the delta restoration and Ohop Valley restoration—and alleviate concerns around the acquisition of land to protect salmon using state funds. Both JT and Shelly have asked for a budget request to support the Nisqually River Council; more updates will be provided as they are available. David is also working with the Puget Sound Partnership and other entities on the Governor's budget, which was released two days ago. The budget included \$50 million in PSAR funds and \$20 million for large capital projects. Funds allocated towards SRF Board remain as they have, which includes a 15% match from the state. The Nisqually Watershed is expected to receive approximately \$1.5 million of PSAR funds and \$300,000 SRF Board funds.
- *Staff Report*– Morgan has taken the majority of December off. She noted that the Nisqually Stream Stewards will host a salmon carcass tossing event on Martin Luther King Day, January 16. More details will be shared early in the New Year.

Allied Programs

- *Nisqually Land Trust* – The Nisqually Community Forest (NCF) closed on the first parcel! Drone footage of the property is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EP8yShmHMA>. The parcel is 640 acres; up to 2 more sections may be purchased in 2017. NCF is working closely with Bob McKane (EPA) to incorporate VELMA modeling into the Tribe's EDT modeling; this informs the best timber regimes in order to maximize benefits for salmon. The initial purchase was about \$3 million; approximately \$8 million additional funds are available for future purchases. Justin noted the Nisqually Indian Tribe's Salmon Recovery Program has contributed significantly to the project, both in terms of financial and in-kind support. In other news, Forterra acquired land on Anderson Island several years ago, but left 18 acres of shoreline property unprotected. That property is now for sale, but Forterra did not have sufficient funds to purchase the property. As a part of the NLT's new marine conservation initiative, the Land Trust Board decided to allocate funds towards the project. The property will close by the end of 2016; it will include trails that are open to the public. The Land Trust is also working to protect key properties along the Nisqually River near the City of Yelm's Yelm Tenino Trail. The Scenic Byway Management Plan is completed and may lead to opportunities to pursue funds for implementation of the byway.
- *Nisqually River Education Project* – The NRF recently completed a small grant from the Model Forest Policy Program that supplemented the NOAA grant. Salmon carcass tossing field trips will start in January, and winter water quality monitoring will occur on February 16th. The 25th annual Student GREEN Congress is on March 23rd; thank you Phyllis and Lois for securing funding through the Sierra Club! Sheila recently collaborated with the Refuge to write a 'Hands on the Land Grant', which was successful. Funds have been secured through the Shellfish Protection District to support nearshore trips.
- *Nisqually River Foundation* – The NRF continues to work on its Strategic Plan; the information compiled by the NRC and other partners has been boiled down into 6 major strategies and a 3-year Workplan. The NRF Board met last week to discuss the purpose and mission of the NRF; one result was to link the Board and NRC more closely. The strategic plan will be brought before the NRC in February for approval. Lastly, the NRC will bring on a new intern from December-February.
- *Salmon Recovery Update* – There has been more research on sea lion predation on salmon in Puget Sound and the Nisqually Delta, especially in regards to impacts on steelhead populations. Chris noted that sea lions are now moving so far upstream that they are predating on salmon right off the spawning grounds. The study has shown that juveniles are predated on as juveniles by harbor seals, then again by sea lions are returning adults. A report from the Columbia River showed that marine mammals eat 35% of returning adults; similar predation numbers may be true of the Nisqually River too. Chris, Darric and other partners recently visited the Centralia Diversion Dam to examine the possibilities in installing a fish trap to capture adult salmon at the site. The trap would allow for non-lethal sampling methods, and would replace some of the lost efforts of the weir. The counter camera continues to work well; 200 coho passed through in one week. Chris applied for a grant that would support on-the-ground stream surveys in the Nisqually Community Forest. Engineered Log Jams (ELJs) in Smallwood Park started to erode and fail this year, but the Tribe was able to allocate funds necessary for the repair. This prompted further analysis of ELJs in the watershed and highlighted that the watershed is lacking in large woody debris required for natural recruitment. Late chum are returning but pre season forecasts were just above escapement needs. The State and Tribes agreed to forego fishing until the escapement goals have been reached.

3. Northwest Products Stewardship Council – Peter Thermos

The Northwest Products Stewardship Council (NWSPC) works in Oregon and Washington and has representation from various solid waste disposal groups. Peter explained the difference between a waste management system and a producer responsibility system. Waste management systems do not offer many incentives for producers to create products that are recyclable or contain environmentally friendly materials. Producer responsibility systems are funded by both producers and consumers, and do promote a more environmentally responsible approach. In Washington, about 77% of counties actively support Product Stewardship and build it into their program budgets. E-cycle Washington began in 2009 and was passed in 2006, and has more than 350 no-cost collection sites and has created more than 125 private-sector jobs. Over 320 million pounds have been recycled since the project started. Light Recycle Washington first started in 2012, but was held up in court until 2015. Since January of 2015, about 2 million lights have been recycled.

Peter hopes the NRC can provide expertise/guidance in water quality protection especially in terms of paint disposal. The paint industry introduced producer responsibility legislation in Washington to create a recycling program for latex and oil-based paint, but it has never received a vote in the Senate. It has support of the House, but has failed for 5 years. The program would be run by the non-profit PaintCare, which operates successfully in multiple states. Peter believes this program is crucial: under a similar stewardship program, Oregon processed approximately 618,971 gallons of paint in 2015, or about 0.15 gallons per resident. Using the same math, approximately 1,000,000 gallons of paint are used in Washington annually, which has a large potential to enter waterbodies either through dumping or via the wastewater system. NWPSC wishes to build support for the paint stewardship program in the state, and has met with 14 legislators. Support is needed from businesses and residents, and the bill will come up again in 2017. David and Amber noted that this has not been a topic of conversation within the Puget Sound Partnership, but agreed that it should be added to the table. Rene' suggested that the NRC write a letter of support, too. www.paintcare.org has research available for review.

The NWPSC is also working on a pharmaceutical drug recycling program. The drugs are often thrown in the trash or flushed; however, these drugs have been detected in fish. Drug overdose is also the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. A statewide prescription medicine take-back program will be brought before the legislature in 2017; Peter suggested that those in support of the program contact their representatives to express their support for the bill. He noted that King, Snohomish, Kitsap and Pierce counties recently passed local ordinances allowing secure medicine return programs.

Peter's presentation is here: <http://www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/producer-responsibility-a-tool-to-manage-toxic-garbage>.

4. Benthic Trawl Studies in the South Sound: 1987 vs. 2014/15 – Celia Barton & Lauran Warner

Celia and Lauran are a part of an interagency organization called the Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) that examines open-water disposal sites, evaluation procedures and disposal site monitoring. The DMMP has representation from US Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Ecology and the Environmental Protection Agency. There are established disposal sites for uncontaminated materials throughout Puget Sound and along the Washington Coast. Celia and Lauran will specifically talk about one off of Anderson and Ketron Islands. This site is a non-dispersive dumpsite that was established in 1989. It is 360-480 feet deep and was chosen because it has relatively few biological resources. All materials are adequately tested prior to disposal. The disposal site was grandfathered in under the Nisqually Reach Aquatic Reserve management plan. In 2014/15, the DMMP recreated a benthic trawl study completed in 1987 to 1) determine if anything has changed since 1987; 2) compare invertebrate communities at on-site stations to off-site stations; 3) compare on-site Dungeness crab and Pandalid shrimp densities to commercially viable thresholds used in 1987. The study used the same 30 stations as in 1987, as well as 8 additional on-site stations. Each station was monitored quarterly.

The primary focus on the study was on species of commercial and recreational importance including crab, pandalid shrimp, sea cucumbers and "other" invertebrates. Results documented nearly 50 species of fish including many flatfish and no endangered species. Dungeness crab densities has increased in the study area between the two studies, but only 2 crabs were found in the disposal site. Rock crab densities greatly increased; the rock crabs found in the disposal site were primarily *Cancer gracilis*, which are not targeted commercially or recreationally. Although the study showed a gap in Dungeness crab sizes, Chris noted that Margaret Homerding, the Tribe's Shellfish Biologist has extensively studied the crab populations—the research overwhelmingly points to environmental factors as the cause in size distribution. Shrimp densities grew drastically between the two studies and across the study area. Shrimp distribution was found to be depth dependent. Shrimp found in the disposal site were most commonly pink shrimp, which are not commercially or recreationally valuable. There are about ½ the number of sea cucumbers now than there were in 1987, but an equal number of sea stars. The majority of creatures were found off-site rather than on-site, and it still appears as though the disposal site is in an area of relatively few resources. Finally, the study found the disposal site does not exceed population sizes for harvestable species, except for pink shrimp, which are unlikely to be targeted.

Celia clarified that material generally comes from small marinas in the area; the Port of Olympia's material generally does not pass testing required prior to dumping. Lauran noted that the study resulted in changes to the dumping program, including requiring all material be passed through a screen to remove large debris. The report is here:

http://www.nws.usace.army.mil/Portals/27/docs/civilworks/dredging/Monitoring/Final%20Anderson%20Ketron%20Survey%20Report_Apr%202016.pdf. Field data is available by contacting Luran directly (lauran.c.warner@usace.army.mil). The presentation is here: <http://www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/benthic-trawl-studies-in-the-south-sound-1987-vs-20142015>.

5. For the Good of the Order

Today is Sandra's last NRC meeting as Thurston County Commissioner! She is retiring at the end of the year and has been a tremendous friend of the Nisqually River Council. David presented her with a blanket; Sandra noted that her favorite part of the NRC is the diversity of the people around the table.

Daniel noted that the Luhr Beach pier is falling apart, and NRNC is very supportive of the pier being rebuilt as an access point for the public. WDFW is launching a site-wide project to revamp Luhr Beach. A grant proposal has been submitted; the NRC will be notified if a Letter of Support would be useful.

Darric is moving to a new job. He will continue to stay involved as he can, but Matt Curtis will likely be the new NRC representative for WDFW. Darric will be managing wildlife areas in Olympic, south Puget Sound and Scatter Creek.

The last Beer College of the year will be today from 5-7pm at the Nisqually Bar and Grill. There is an optional White Elephant Gift Giving.

Adjourn – Meeting was adjourned at 12:00pm.

*Next Meeting: Friday January 20, 2016
UW Pack Forest; NWSP Topic: Recreation*