



Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council Meeting
February 17, 2017
Yelm Community Center
Information: 360.438.8715

Attendees:

Council Members

Amy Cruver – *Pierce County*

Matt Curtis – *WDFW*

Gary Edwards – *Thurston County*

JW Foster – *City of Yelm*

Abby Gribi – *Town of Eatonville*

Amber Martens – *JBLM*

Amber Moore – *Puget Sound Partnership*

Jessica Moore – *NW Trek*

*** CAC Representatives (1)**

Citizens Advisory Committee Members

Fred Michelson

Karelina Resnick

Bob Smith

Marjorie Smith

Lois Ward*

Guests

Roger Andrascik – *Nisq. Stream Stewards/Land Trust*

Warren Bergh – *Nisqually Stream Stewards*

Lloyd Fetterly – *Nisqually Land Trust*

Darric Lowery – *WDFW*

Curtis McFeron – *NOAA*

Chip Panowicz – *Citizen*

Etsuko Reistroffer – *Nisqually Stream Stewards*

Kevin Skerl – *Mount Rainier National Park*

Jeaniel Thomas – *Sierra Club*

Glen Thomas – *Sierra Club*

Ashley Von Essen – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*

Cindy Wilson – *Thurston County*

Staff & Associated Nonprofits

Morgan Greene – *Nisqually River Council*

Justin Hall – *Nisqually River Foundation*

Joe Kane – *Nisqually Land Trust*

Sheila Wilson – *Nisqually River Ed. Project*

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

Call to Order – JW called the meeting to order at 9:13 am.

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

2. Reports

Advisory Committee Reports

- *Citizens Advisory Committee* – Fred reported that the CAC met on Tuesday evening and heard from members about local issues, including the best places to hike this time of year. Jeaniel and Glen attended for the first time. Ed spoke about the potential restoration of Sequelitchew Creek.
- *Chair Report* – Nothing at this time.
- *Staff Report* – The Nisqually Stream Stewards will host a tube removal event on Saturday March 25; more details will be shared soon. The Nisqually River Water Trail project has been extended through the end of this fiscal year, and the Delta Data project is still in the works too. Morgan is coordinating with Ashley to produce the Yil Me Hu newsletter. Finally, much of Morgan's time has been busy helping Sheila prepare for water quality monitoring day and Student GREEN Congress. JW added that recruiting new volunteers is vital in volunteer events—he encouraged everyone to send along social media events to their own contact lists.

Allied Programs

- *Nisqually Land Trust* – The annual Fundraiser/Auction is on April 1st, and sign ups are being accepted online now! Joe passed around the final version of the Scenic Byway Management Plan, which is also available online. The Land Trust is about to close on the Schmauder property along the whitewater reach

of the Nisqually River, through Conservation Futures funding. The parcel is adjacent to the future Yelm-Tenino trail extension; Cris Peck will be working with the City of Yelm to develop a plan for the trail.

- *Nisqually River Education Project* – Sheila reported that winter water quality monitoring was yesterday, February 16, with 38 teachers visiting 34 monitoring sites. The number of students engaged will be calculated at a later date. Water quality results will be presented at Student GREEN Congress on March 23, and volunteers are still needed! This is the 25th anniversary of the event, and will feature Gene Tagaban as keynote speaker. Approximately 400 students will attend. Salmon carcass tossing ended last month, with a total of 10 trips and 13 classes. Eye on Nature trips are all booked up; this year, Sheila will attempt to double their numbers by bringing 3-4 classes at a time instead of 2. The Eye on Nature fundraiser will be on March 14 at Fish Tale Brew Pub from 5-9pm. Sheila recently submitted a 5 Star Grant Application to support planting. ALEA and Connecting People with Nature grants have deadlines approaching soon.
- *Nisqually River Foundation* – Justin continues the Community Forest planning, and has been representing the Nisqually at the NW Community Forest coalition in Portland. He recently recovered one of the “Entering Nisqually Basin” signs from the Department of Transportation and is researching costs to replace it. There is a new possibility of establishing an overlook on Old Mounts Road to highlight the delta restoration. Finally, Justin continues to meet with JT Wilcox and other representatives to pursue funding of the Nisqually River Council. JW added that many legislators have talked about eliminating multiple funding sources; he suggested calling representatives to express support for the funding pots that are important to you.
- *Salmon Recovery Update* – Ashley reported that last year, a winter storm knocked out one of the logjams in Smallwood Park. Luckily, the logjam was fixed last November. This week, Ashley and Cathy Sampsele (Nisqually Tribe Restoration Biologist) planted the top of the logjam with 50 native plants. The plants are crucial to the long-term stabilization of the jam. Ashley is in the middle of the SRF Board funding round, and both the Nisqually Land Trust and South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group are expected to submit project proposals. Letters of Intent are due on February 28th, and project presentations will take place the next day at the regularly scheduled Habitat Work Group meeting. Justin added that he, David, Brian Combs (SPSSEG) and the Wilcox Family met recently to discuss a potential project along the Wilcox Farm’s land adjacent to the Nisqually River.

3. **Puget Sound Consortium** – *Gary Edwards, Thurston County Commissioner*

Gary is concerned about Victoria, BC’s lack of a proper wastewater system. He is interested in establishing a consortium of stakeholders from throughout the Puget Sound region to encourage the implementation of the city’s plan to develop a system, largely through economic boycotts. Lloyd noted that renovations of existing systems are already very expensive, sometimes over \$1 million. Amber reported that the issue is on the Puget Sound Partnership’s radar, though they are not currently involved in lobbying efforts. It may be an issue of higher concern for some of the northernmost lead entities. JW suggested continuing the conversation with David and other interested parties at the next meeting.

4. **North Cascades Grizzly Bears** – *Jessica Moore, Northwest Trek Education/Conservation Curator*

Northwest Trek has a strong interest in supporting conservation efforts throughout the state. In the North Cascades, efforts are underway to introduce grizzly bears. Because bears are an important native species, Northwest Trek is involved in the conservation efforts. Grizzly bear numbers have drastically declined in the last century, in large part due to overhunting and habitat fragmentation. The bears are currently found in just 2% of their natural range in the lower 48 states, and there are fewer than 10 grizzlies left in the North Cascades ecosystem. The last confirmed sighting in Washington was in 1996. The North Cascades ecosystem is one of the largest contiguous blocks of natural land in Washington—about 9,800 square miles—and is largely protected by national park or national forest lands. With only 5-10 bears in that whole area, it is the most at-risk grizzly population in the U.S.

Grizzlies are an iconic Pacific Northwest species and important to the cultural heritage of the region. Bears also keep the ecosystem healthy for humans, because as a keystone species, they provide important environmental services. For instance, bears spread seeds and aquatic nutrients that help maintain healthy forests. Grizzlies also aerate and fertilize soil, especially at mid-to high-elevations. No other animals are able to fill the niche that grizzlies have. Northwest Trek is also committed to providing opportunities to coexist with animals, so conservation opportunities like this one is vital to their mission.

To aid in introduction efforts, the Friends of the North Cascades Grizzly Bear was established with multiple stakeholders including Northwest Trek. The primary role of the group is education; the National Park Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service are acting as the lead entities in recovery. To date, a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has been released as a required component of a recovery plan, as directed by the Endangered Species Act. The draft EIS is available for public comment through March 14, 2017 at 11:59 pm.

The Draft EIS has four alternatives. Alternative A is no action; in other words, maintaining the status quo. Alternative B is “Ecosystem Evaluation Restoration,” and calls for up to 10 bears to be released in the first 2 years, followed by 2 years of monitoring. Alternative C is “Incremental Restoration,” where 5-7 bears would be released each year for 5-10 years, establishing an initial population of 25 bears. Alternative D is “Expedited Restoration,” which would work to reach a population of 200 bears as fast as possible. The Friends of the North Cascades Grizzly Bear supports Alternative C, because they feel it moves recovery along at a sustainable pace while still allowing for adaptive management/monitoring. The same alternative has been successfully implemented in Montana, thus providing a proven track record.

Jessica noted that anyone can comment on the draft EIS. Visit northcascadegrizzly.org to find a link to the comment form. From there, you can express your support for an alternative and provide other comments. All comments must be received by March 14, 2017 at 11:59 pm. After the public comment period, the final EIS will be written and eventually a recovery plan will be written and implemented. Jessica also noted that the Friends of the North Cascades Grizzly Bear’s website has important information about bears and the recovery plan. Her presentation is available here: https://prezi.com/zlo21gprnu3y/north-cascades-grizzly-bears/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy.

Questions:

JW: Are there natural corridors between other existing populations that would encourage natural reproduction, or is the reintroduction the only way for success? Matt believes that there are other barriers to recovery beyond migration corridors that make reintroduction a more feasible effort.

Cindy: Where will the bears come from? Bears in Montana and B.C. will be caught because they have similar diets and habitat needs.

Joe: Are the bears in the North Cascades genetically unique from the British Columbia bears? Jessica doesn’t believe so. Joe also wondered about efforts to reduce conflicts between livestock? The bears will be released far from the nearest communities to reduce those conflicts. She noted that issues around wolves are different than the issues surrounding grizzlies.

Curtis: Will there be competition between grizzlies and other apex species? No, probably not. What are the impacts of grizzly introduction on other animal populations? Jessica doesn’t know specifically, but it is probably included in the EIS.

5. Fostering Resilient Communities – Sheila Wilson, Nisqually River Education Project Director

The Nisqually River Education Project (NREP) received a 3-year environmental literacy grant through NOAA. The program recently completed its first year of the program. The program, called “Fostering Resilient Climate Leaders, Communities and Coastal Ecosystems” is a collaborative effort between NREP, NOAA, South Sound GREEN, Chehalis Basin Education Consortium/ESD 113, the Nisqually Indian Tribe, Nisqually Land Trust, Lennox Insites, and many other partners. It has 2 main components: Summer Teacher Institute and Action Projects for Community Resiliency.

The program launched with the 2016 Summer Teachers Institute, which had a theme of Oceans, Sea Level Rise, and Ocean Acidification. It was the biggest Institute ever, with over 60 teachers attending. The 3-day institute included a keynote from Bobbak Talebi (Department of Ecology), a trip to Grays Harbor and the Washington Coast, and an expert panel with speakers from Our Children’s Trust, Nisqually Land Trust, and Climate Solutions. The event drummed up support for the new Climate Resiliency Fellows program and Action Projects for Community Resiliency. Chuck Lennox of LennoxInsites conducted Monitoring and Evaluation pre-and post-Institute, and found a significant increase in teacher confidence to teacher climate change in the classroom. The new Climate Resiliency Fellows program works to create a dynamic community of engaged teachers committed to engaging their students in taking local action on climate change issues. The program provides quarterly meetings, clock-hours and a stipend.

Last year, Action Projects for Community Resiliency launched with a successful year of habitat restoration. Over 840 students and 101 parents planted over 2,400 trees at 3 sites in the watershed. The numbers of trees planted by students were slightly lower this year due to extremely thick layers of grass. Partners within the Nisqually Indian Tribe, Nisqually Land Trust and Washington Conservation Corps were on hand to plant remaining trees. Other Action Projects will launch this year, including the Cool Schools Challenge, Stream Flow and Water Quality Monitoring, and the Pacific Northwest Climate Leaders webportal (climate.nisquallyriver.org).

Sheila's presentation is available here: https://prezi.com/-qoypo9mg91h/copy-of-csip-nisqually-river-foundation/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy.

6. For the Good of the Order

The next beer college is on February 24 from 5-7pm at Top Rung Brewery.

Lois announced that the Sierra Club is airing "Before the Flood" on March 12 at 1:00 pm.

JW introduced Michael, the new City Administrator for Yelm.

Roger spotted over 30 eagles along the Bud Blancher Trail after the last salmon tossing event.

Kevin added that the last fisher release will be along the Cispus River next week.

Darric noted that the restoration of Luhr's Beach is moving forward.

Adjourn – Meeting was adjourned at 11:00pm.

*Next Meeting: Friday March 17, 2017
Northwest Trek; NWSP Topic: Community Wellness*