



Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council Meeting
January 19, 2018
UW Pack Forest
Information: 360.438.8715

Attendees:

Council Members:

Dan Calvert – *Puget Sound Partnership*
Matt Curtis – *WDFW*
Amy Cruver – *Pierce County Council*
Gary Edwards – *Thurston Co. Commission*

JW Foster – *City of Yelm*
Abby Gribi – *Town of Eatonville*
Amber Martens – *JBLM*
David Troutt, Chair – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*

Citizens Advisory Committee Members:

Allie Denzler – *CAC*
Phyllis Farrell – *CAC (chair)*
Howard Glastetter – *CAC*
Ed Kenney – *CAC*

Fred Michelson – *CAC*
Robert Smith – *CAC*
Marjorie Smith – *CAC*
Lois Ward – *CAC*

Guests:

Roger Andrascik – *NSS*
Jeff Barney – *Pierce County*
Warren Bergh – *NSS*
Karen Bergh – *NSS*
Molly Carmody – *City of Yelm*
Lloyd Fetterly – *NLT/NSS*

Micah Goo – *Centralia City Light*
Martin McCallum – *NLT/NSS*
Jim Reistroffer – *NSS*
Etsuko Reistroffer – *NSS*
Ashley Von Essen – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*

Staff:

Brandon Bywater – *NRF*
Justin Hall – *NRF*
Joe Kane – *Nisqually Land Trust*

Emily McCartan – *NRF*
Sheila Wilson – *NRF*

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

David called the meeting to order at 9:05am.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes from the November 17, 2017 meeting be approved. Howard Glastetter offered comments on TPU's presentation with additional information about historical reservoir levels and flood risks (full comments are available from staff). The minutes and agenda for today's meeting were approved.

Introductions for several new agency representatives joining the Council this month:

- Molly Carmody, Yelm city councilmember, will be the new representative for the City of Yelm. She replaces JW, who is stepping down due to his responsibilities as mayor, but hopes to continue supporting the NRC's work. JW is also stepping off Land Trust board, after spearheading term limits for board members.

- Dan Calvert is replacing Amber Moore as the representative from Puget Sound Partnership. Dan is the Ecosystem Recovery Coordinator for the South Sound region (WRIAs 10, 11, 13, and 14) with a background in wildlife biology, environmental and tribal education, and watershed management and land use policy.

2. Committee Reports and Updates

Advisory Committee Reports

Citizens Advisory Committee – Phyllis Farrell

The CAC met on Tuesday, 1/17, with a presentation from Bill Von Buskirk, City of Yelm, on wastewater management (follow-up to a presentation he gave last year). Positive report, talked about addressing deferred maintenance and overall challenges, but operations are improving. Yelm is now producing Class A reclaimed water again. The CAC also discussed concerns about flood risk at Alder Dam, the Thurston County subarea plan review on recycled asphalt production, and legislative issues, in particular water and net pen bills that might apply in the Nisqually Watershed. The CAC encourages the NRC to adopt and send the draft letter to the Thurston County Commission regarding the use of Conservation Futures funds for the proposed Habitat Conservation Plan.

Chair report – David Troutt

- Last night the Legislature passed the capital budget, bond, and a bill addressing the *Hirst* water issue. Funds will now start flowing for capital projects, including salmon recovery. David was involved in working on the water bill, which isn't perfect, but has a lot of opportunity. Existing, approved watershed plans can apply to Ecology quickly for implementation funds (monies available in September). Nisqually's plan has lots of projects that have been ready to go for years, and this could be an opportunity to move some of these toward implementation. The bill may result in more development in rural areas, with water availability consequences, but in Nisqually we have the opportunity to control that growth and protect summer instream flows. Yelm also had items funded in the capital budget, and a pilot project for regaining water rights following the *Foster* decision.
- Working on transportation issues related to salmon habitat and recovery, especially configuration of I-5 across the delta. Discussion has moved beyond environmental into economic and military preparedness issues. The South Sound Military Community Partnership has been lobbying on it this year, requesting study with a focus on the delta area, looking at bridge improvement, dike removal, and putting the freeway on a pier to allow the river to migrate.
- The Governor is expected to release an executive order establishing a task force around orca recovery. Southern resident population is at critically low state. There may be strong alignment with salmon recovery and funding some of the Tribe's work with Chinook. Tribe is reserving judgment about the possibility of increasing hatchery production. David will be engaged at some level with the task force and is optimistic that it will provide some momentum and focus.
- The Tribe is involved in discussions about the several Atlantic salmon net pen bills. 7 Atlantic salmon caught in Nisqually by the Tribe, a few additional by recreational fishers. One was caught in spawning ground.

- USSC elected to hear the State's appeal in the Treaty Tribes' case on culverts blocking fish passage. We tried to settle before it got to the Supreme Court, but it will be heard in April. If they overturn the decision, it will gut a lot of the stuff we do and make it more difficult.

Staff report – Emily McCartan

- The executive committee approved sending a letter opposing the proposed NPS fee increases, which was submitted by the deadline in December. The draft letter on Thurston Conservation Futures, requested by the CAC, is before the NRC today for approval.
 - It was moved and seconded that the Council approve sending the letter on Conservation Futures to the Thurston County Commissioners. The motion was approved.
- We are moving forward on NWSP Status Report project, which will establish a baseline of data on the NWSP indicators. A small working group will begin meeting next Wednesday to guide the research efforts for that report, which is scheduled to be delivered to the NRC in June.

Gary Edwards brought up a concern about water quality impacts of nitrogen fertilizer use in commercial timberlands. Weyerhaeuser and others in industry, including DNR, has been applying nitrogen fertilizer with helicopters for decades (dispersed as pellets during the winter). As Gary has asked around, nobody seems to be testing or looking at its impacts. Concerns are not just for salmon (oxygenation and nutrient depletion), but also about increased brush growth that fuels fire in longer, drier summers. Gary has asked Thurston County staff to look into it and is talking to Denny Heck's office. Has this been brought to the NRC before now? Consensus around the room was that most people don't know much about this issue. Justin noted that Pack Forest was the center of forest fertilization studies, but he doesn't know the current status. He may have contacts who can provide some information. David noted that the NRC has never talked about this before, but will tee up some presentations to find out. Nitrogen is included in the TMDLs for the Nisqually. Jim noted that nitrogen is an issue with farming in general and has been documented in rivers in the Midwest (Mississippi floods cause plumes of nitrogen flowing into the Gulf and up the East Coast). Fred recalled presentations from Ecology on nitrogen, which they find the hardest thing to clean up. Maps identify tributaries and wastewater treatment plants. Gary noted problems at Summit Lake with toxicity and algae blooms. It's in a bowl surrounded by forest industry, so nitrogen collects in the lake. Roger noted that UW's climate change research highlights precipitation changes that are shifting from snow-dominated to rain-dominated at higher elevations, including greater intensity and duration of storms. Nitrogen that might have been released more slowly in a snowier system now washes in quickly with flash floods and rain. Joe stated that he hasn't looked specifically at nitrogen, but did a grant with NLT, NRF and others a few years ago about assessing water quality and quantity in Tumwater. Looking upstream at Weyerhaeuser's intensive forestry, it's obvious where it's coming from. Nothing to suggest regulations are being violated – they're probably working to the letter of the law. Actions would likely either be working to change regulations, over objections from forestry association, or buying habitat back, which is the route we're trying to take in Nisqually. Deschutes headwaters are out of Lewis County. We're trying to get Ecology to

make the connection so we can buy land directly from timber close to the river, and get credits from Ecology for that. It was agreed that the NRC would like to look into this in upcoming meetings.

Reports from Allied Programs

Nisqually Land Trust – Joe Kane

- Full workplan for the year, with projects on mainstem, Ohop, and Mashel. Working on a proposal for a major trails project with Yelm to extend the Yelm-Tenino trail.
- May not have an office next week if there's no federal budget.
- Most successful year-end appeal this year. Community Foundation of South Puget Sound had a Give Local campaign. NLT had 2nd most participants, got a nice match.
- Annual conservation dinner and auction on March 17, at the SPSCC Lacey Campus. Tickets are discounted until Feb. 3. If you haven't had an auction invitation show up already, it should be coming soon.

Nisqually River Education Project – Sheila Wilson

- It's the middle of salmon toss season. Got a memorable alert from Abby about a cougar sighting at Smallwood Park, but didn't see it on the field trip. Community Salmon Toss event is coming up on 1/27.
- This Tuesday, 1/23, is our fundraiser for Eye on Nature. Supports field trips for many local students who have never been to the Refuge. Fish Tale Brew Pub is sponsoring.
- Water Quality Monitoring day on 2/15, with teacher meetings and trainings for volunteers leading up to it. Students will take this data to Student GREEN Congress. Keynote for Congress this year is Killer Whale Tales. If you're a water quality expert or learner, we love extra volunteer hands to help at Congress (Thursday, 3/22). Also looking with other local groups at creating statewide conference or gathering for WQM, pursuing a grant.
- Sheila and Emily attended a training at EPA about a new program on trash and plastics protocol survey, getting citizens and students involved with identifying sources.

Nisqually River Foundation – Justin Hall

- Justin has been away the last 3 NRC meetings for AgForestry, a leadership course on public policy for folks in the forestry field. Class of 40 with a wide range of participants. Meetings so far have been in Pullman, Wenatchee, Spokane, and Tacoma, touring various facilities and covering communication, leadership skills, media, food security, and public speaking (Justin spoke on why all rivers should have watershed councils). Would like to get Spokesman Review editor out here to talk about pivot to long form reporting – series on agriculture in WA. Next month, will be in Olympia to talk about state government, then to DC in late February. The Foundation funds \$6,000 of the cost, and AgForestry fundraising covers the remaining \$20,000.

Community Forest – Justin Hall and Joe Kane

- Second section purchased, so Community Forest has doubled in size. Tribe is working on a third section. 16,000 acres came up for sale recently, we didn't participate, but curious to see who did. Indications that it went for around \$5,000/acre, more than 25% higher than average. Not to be alarmist, but we will want to keep an eye on it – if someone's paying \$60m for \$40m worth of timber, they're

going to hit it hard for harvest. May want to establish a wider relationship with the buyer. If Clean Water Revolving Fund application is successful, that may help. Haven't heard back officially yet but should have a good shot.

Salmon Recovery – Ashley Von Essen

- Because NIT is down staff, Ashley is coordinating restoration biology and plantings:
 - Upcoming plantings with TPU, 15 acres/year for 6 years. Conifers along mainstem, updating plan to diversify habitat. Should move forward in next month or so.
 - In Ohop, will be planting 5000 live stakes (cottonwood and Pacific willow) next to channel to get shaded areas more quickly.
 - New year, new grant round for Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) and PSAR Fund. Letters of intent due on 3/2, presentations on 3/7.
- Lead Entity Four Year Work Plan Update:
 - Lead Entities produce this document every year for PSP, outlining everything we could do in an ideal world if funding was there. Includes “watch list” type items where we want to keep our eyes open for potential activity (Powell Creek protection, for example) or acquisitions where we don't know exactly what opportunities may come up but want to be ready. Includes items that aren't directly SRFB related (outreach, etc.). Total list is \$56 million: what we could accomplish in 4 years if funding was there.
 - Nisqually Knotweed #6 is a continuation of 10-year Pierce County project, very successful, now in maintenance mode. Could be last SRFB request.
 - Mashel Monitoring plan – logjams implemented 10-15 years ago weren't recruiting enough wood. Would like to go back and check status of each jam, maybe put more wood in as needed until forests in upper basin grow up more.
 - Steelhead habitat acquisition – learning and research phase in smaller tributaries to find out what habitat is like and explore potential projects. Updating our ranking plan so we can apply annual funding to steelhead projects more.
 - Top priorities: Mainstem, Ohop, Mashel. 76-77% of mainstem is protected now. Want to quantify what's been protected on mainstem and major tributaries. Where do we still have left to go? How much does any given project move towards that goal?
 - State Habitat Work Schedule (<http://hws.ekosystem.us/>) is the data clearinghouse for active/dormant/completed projects, including metrics and amounts of funding. Mandated by the state, publicly accessible, anyone can check status of any project.
 - Projects outside the watershed? Mainly in Nearshore area, so they still affect us. Some of also appear on 4-year plans of other WRIAs, so timing of project proposals would determine who takes it on. There is a general nearshore project support category – if Nisqually has extra funds, we can help them out. They helped us with the estuary restoration.

It was moved and seconded to approve the list, with addition of Yelm Creek. The project list was approved unanimously.

- David: Chum run was projected to be very small. Tribe did not have a fishery. Made a tool to update live counts based on Yelm Creek – run turned out to be twice as large

as predicted, so we did open fishery late, probably mid-40s run, caught 9000 fish. Not much in Muck, lots in Exeter.

3. Centralia City Light – Yelm Hydroelectric Project – Micah Goo, Generation Manager

<https://www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/centralia-city-light-yelm-hydroproject-presentation>

- Working to make outreach and education a focus at project sites. FERC asks larger dam owners to create education programs. Yelm project is smaller, but try to do outreach and education anyway as a community responsibility.
- The basics: Project started in 1930 at 4 Mw, a little over 12 Mw right now. 9.1 miles of canal, 26.2 miles of transmission line. Supplements city's power by 30%. Added second powerhouse in the 1950s. Generator upgraded in 1975, replaced wooden box flume with concrete flume. Came under FERC in 1997.
- Work with city of Yelm and others on emergency management if project was to fail. Working on implementing an alert system to notify homeowners. Try to stay active on educating public to prevent failures – encourage them to recognize what it looks like when canal is breached, and let us know if they see water or a breach.
- Diversion dam facility across from Wilcox farm with portage for kayakers around dam. 4 ft. wall, takes 800cfs from the river. Plenty of signage to make sure people get out of kayaks at the diversion dam for safety. Boom in place from May to October.
- Fish come through a fish ladder at the diversion dam. Any fish that comes back down goes into return pipe to drop downstream of the dam. Try to mitigate fish casualties, very effective state-of-the-art screens. Working with Tribe to put in fish trap at site. There is a fish camera there now.
- 5-acre wildlife habitat (required by FERC license) around the canal, lots of birds. It's private, not open to the public, because of safety concerns about people falling into the canal. Private, not open to public, lots of birds. Land Trust or others working out there call City Light if they're doing work out there.
- Working on improvements to canal embankments. Every August, outage for 2-3 weeks to empty and clean out the canal (trash dumping, oil and toxics are a regular problem).
- Public parks: McKenna Park and Nisqually Park belongs to City of Centralia. Making park improvements, installing signage, shelters, and public safety notices about rafting and boating hazards. Park amenities include boat ramps, picnic and play area, birdwatching/wildlife, designated pet area. Trail signage was designed by local student, identifying trees and plants. Security cameras for public safety.
- Educational Tours: WQM students from Southworth Elementary. Private tours of the powerhouse or other outreach available any time – call Micah to arrange.
- City Light is eager to work with NRC and be an active part of the Nisqually community. Micah values transparency and active partnership so we can fix issues now, rather than more expensively later. He works closely with George and Bill from Tribe. David agreed it's been a positive relationship, and Micah has always come up with solutions.

Questions:

- How difficult was it during low flow? Shut down for 3 months in 2016. Work with Nisqually River Coordinating Committee (TPU, Ecology). It's lost revenue for city, but understand importance of maintaining fish habitat. Hydropower is cheap and green, but generation is secondary to survival of fish.

4. **State of the Sound Report** – *Dan Calvert, Puget Sound Partnership*
<https://www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/state-of-the-sound-2018>
- Biennial report to assess information about Sound ecosystems. Adaptive management, continuous learning approach to achieving recovery.
 - Vital Signs – metrics for ecosystem health
 - Goals were ambitious, may not be met. Need to accelerate progress.
 - Framework highlights human and ecosystem components of Puget Sound recovery. PSP is working to advance efforts to see the Sound as an interdependent socio-ecological system.
 - Grading the indicators – 10 getting better, 2 will hit 2020 targets; 9 mixed results; 6 not improving (including Chinook); 4 getting worse (orcas, marine water quality, lands lost to development, Pacific herring)
 - Project case studies:
 - Seahurst Park Beach Restoration (Burien) – removed seawall, increased public access in highly urbanized area, restoring sediment processes. Observed forage fish spawning for first time in 7 years.
 - Drayton Harbor shellfish beds – community effort (35 community partners) reduced pollution, able to reopen 810 acres of shellfish beds. Worked with 35 community partners. Intentional data collection and monitoring can be a positive feedback loop for these efforts.
 - Orting Floodplain restoration – set levees back from Puyallup channel bed, improving community flood protection and salmon habitat (juvenile fish seen almost immediately). Multi-benefit projects with ecological and infrastructure/ economic benefits, especially important with climate change.
 - Rain gardens for runoff at Aurora Bridge in Seattle – urban runoff is significant issue for salmon mortality. Project added additional greenspace to treat downspouts from bridge. Public park space, handles 200k gallons of runoff.
 - 362 near-term actions for 2016-2018. Agencies submit projects to get prioritized for regional funding. Currently, 74% are active, off schedule; 19% active, on schedule; 4% not reporting; 3% closed out; 1% fully implemented. Concerns about lack of adequate resources – 73% funding gap for total projects identified.
 - Concerns for PSP Leadership Council (governor-appointed board):
 - Not investing at the level necessary to achieve recovery.
 - Too few people understand Puget Sound is in trouble – people think it’s doing great. Don’t understand how dire situation is.
 - Strong focus on restoration projects, but maybe not enough on protecting what we already have – conversion of ecologically important lands for growth and development keeps happening.
 - Keeping up with booming economy. Companies are coming here because it’s a great place to live, but need to try to tap into those economic resources to strengthen environmental protections. PSP is working to mobilize funding.
 - Spreading the word about the State of the Sound report and efforts:
 - Arrange public field trips to successful restoration sites
 - Offer to speak at school, senior centers, other public venues
 - Engage local officials – especially with economic lens

- Resources from Partnership to help: webinars, FAQs, factsheets, presentations. Cathy Cochrane or Dan are the best people to get in touch with for resources.

Questions:

- Proposed EPA cuts affecting PSP funding?
 - Not sure, but strong partners in DC fighting hard for Puget Sound. To best of my knowledge, PSP budget in National Estuary program is ok for next fiscal year.
- Underfunded by \$197m. What's the budget for next year? When will top priority projects get done?
 - Nationwide National Estuary Program funds 28 total estuary restoration projects. PSP is the only one not run top-down by EPA, more of a bottom-up input structure with local priorities to allocate funds. The \$197m is the local projects solicited for possible funding. \$30-40m available a year to tackle \$200m worth of projects. Also get funds from salmon recovery, Puget Sound acquisitions.
 - Bigger projects that would have biggest impact are harder to get started, because the costs are too high. "We need a billion dollars and 80 years" is a tough ask.
- How much private partnership are you looking at for funding?
 - Increasing private contributions is next big challenge for the effort. Relying on government funding is harder and harder to secure. Need to find ways of encouraging private investment – through business partnerships, or a tax. Spending less than 1% of total state budget on natural resource issues, when economy is booming.
 - Conservation community has found it puzzlingly hard to get big companies interested. Working on that outreach.

5. For the Good of the Order

- JBLM has free sedges available for anyone interested.
- Nicole Hill just took a job with Nature Conservancy in AZ. She is taking with her the bookkeeper for NLT, NRF, PSI, SPSSEG – so if anybody knows bookkeepers looking for a job, put out the word. The position will be employed through NRF. Emily will send the job description around when it's posted.
- Fundraisers in Yelm honoring the memorial fund for Deputy McCartney, who lived there. Stomping Grounds Coffee is donating their proceeds today.
- Reminder about the Eye On Nature fundraiser - Tuesday at Fish Tale Brew Pub.
- JBLM has 2 paid seasonal restoration internships opening up for 7 months. Hired through Colorado State U: <https://www.cemml.colostate.edu/careers/> (Washington State).
- Pierce County, the fiscal agent for SPS shellfish recovery, was just awarded another \$832,000. Total will amount to \$1.2m to increase shellfish production and habitat acreage.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:07 pm.