



**Meeting Minutes  
Nisqually River Council  
June 19, 2015  
Ashford Fire Hall  
Information: 360.438.8715**

Attendees:

**Council Members**

**Roger Andrascik** – *Mount Rainier National Park*  
**Doug Beagle** – *Town of Eatonville*  
**JW Foster** – *City of Yelm*  
**Sandra Romero** – *Thurston County*

**Gary Stamper** – *Lewis County*  
**Stephanie Suter** – *Puget Sound Partnership*  
**\* CAC Representatives (2)**

**Citizens Advisory Committee Members**

**Phyllis Farrell**  
**Karelina Resnick\***  
**Marjorie Smith**

**Bob Smith\***  
**Lois Ward**

**Guests**

**Bryan Bowden** – *NRC Alumni*  
**Laura Dabrowski** – *Nisqually Stream Stewards*  
**Jarek Dabrowski** – *Nisqually Stream Stewards*  
**Chris Ellings** – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*

**Chris Schutz** – *Pierce County*  
**Brian Sullivan** – *Nisqually Land Trust*  
**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*

**Tyler Willey** – *Nisqually River Ed. Project*  
**Sheila Wilson** – *Nisqually River Ed. Project*

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

**Call to Order** – Sandra Romero chaired the day's meeting. She called the meeting to order at 9:32 am.

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

**2. Reports**

**Advisory Committee Reports**

- *Citizens Advisory Committee* – Karelina reported that elections will be held in July, with both Fred and Karelina planning to retire their co-chair positions. Sheila attended the last meeting to discuss the Letter of Intent that she has been working on for the Youth Council. David Hymel also presented on green infrastructure and the work he's been doing in the greater Puget Sound region to reduce stormwater runoff. The CAC also plans to complete fieldwork, such as planting trees, in the coming months.

In other news, several CAC members plan to form an independent citizens group that participates in political advocacy. The group would be independent from the NRC. To aide in the transition, the CAC will bring in a speaker with experience in political activism.

- *Chair Report* – David was unable to chair today's meeting.
- *Staff Report* – Morgan attended the Salmon Recovery Conference during the last week of May. While in Vancouver, she and David met with representatives from Gifford Pinchot National Forest to strength the relationship between the NRC and the Forest. Morgan is working to get representations from the Forest to

present on their planning efforts; the Forest also agreed to attend meetings on a quarterly basis. Morgan and David will also meet with WDFW and WDNR in the coming months.

The Nisqually River Trail Advisory Committee had site visits to current access locations at the beginning of the month. There will be a Focus Group workshop next week too. Ashley, Sheila and Morgan are now recruiting for the Nisqually Stream Stewards class! They've already received a great response, with 9 people registered already. Please share the flyers! Finally, festival season has kicked off with initial planning meetings for both the Nisqually Watershed Festival and Eatonville Salmon Fest.

### **Allied Programs**

- *Nisqually Land Trust* – Joe reported that it is grant application season! Between applications to Thurston Conservation Future, Pierce Conservation Futures, and other sources, Joe has been conducting numerous site visits with grant managers. Additionally, the NLT has a new Board Member, Kathy Mix.

The Legislative Session has been a learning experience for the Land Trust. Joe has met frequently with the Puget Sound Partnership and Washington Environmental Council to produce articles for the Seattle Times and The News Tribune about the Community Forest Project. Morgan will share the Seattle Times article. He also met last night with Senator Dan Meyer to discuss PSAR funding.

On another note, the Land Trust launched their summer hike program, with the second one held tomorrow. Around 20 people signed up for the Van Eaton hike two weeks ago! This is aligned with the NLT's new strategic plan, which focuses on increased public engagement. Also, Land Trust will attend the July Yelm City Council meeting to discuss a trail plan. Joe noted that Bob McKane, of the EPA, spoke to the Community Forest Board this week. He will attend the August NRC meeting; his presentation will have powerful monitoring information that will be highly relatable to long-term management in the Watershed.

- *Nisqually River Education Project* – Sheila wrapped up the Eye on Nature Field Trips and hosted a volunteer recognition potluck. She thanked all the volunteers, the key to the program's success. The Poster Contest has been held, and a winner selected! The winning poster will provide advertisement for the Nisqually Watershed Festival. Sheila is also working closely with Peter Donaldson to develop a Letter of Intent for a Boeing funding opportunity that could support the Nisqually Youth Council. If funded, the program would center in Eatonville, and spread from there. Last week, Sheila and Morgan worked with Eatonville High School students to weed raingardens around town. Summer Teacher Institute is Monday through Wednesday next week, with an optional Thursday field trip to the Bullitt Center. This year's theme is biomimicry, with a focus on climate change. The participants will identify ways to mimic nature to combat climate change. On July 15, Sheila will co-host a full day workshop for educators to make it more aligned with Next Generation Science Standards.
- *Nisqually River Foundation* – Justin is happy to announce that the NEP grant for the Community Forest has been fully funded! The funds will be dispersed between the Foundation, Land Trust, Washington Environmental Council and Northwest Natural Resources Group. The Community Forest also won the USFS Community Forest Trust award, which is a combination of planning and acquisition funds. Of the \$200,000 total, \$150,000 are for acquisition and \$50,000 are for planning. The planning funds can be used for both organizational and on-the-ground planning.

Last week, Sheila and Morgan attended a Thurston ECO Network meeting; Don Chalmers of Sparrow Hawk Consulting presented and spoke to the importance of strategic plans. The NRF crew met with Don this week to discuss a strategic planning process looks like. Morgan is currently researching funding sources. We welcome opinions on Sparrow Hawk and/or funding ideas.

- *Salmon Recovery Update* – Chris noted that the Steelhead returns have bounced around between 400-600 fish in the last decade. Currently, the Salmon Recovery Program is predicting around 800 fish this year, though the low water and warm temperatures will most likely cause lower numbers before the summer ends.

Ashley noted that Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) and Puget Sound Acquisition and Recovery (PSAR) applications were due to the RCO on May 13<sup>th</sup>, and site visits were held on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. Two technical SRFB reviewers attended and gave ideas on project improvements. Those opinions were received yesterday, but Ashley noted that there were no projects of concern. On July 1, Habitat Work Group will rank the list. At the July retreat, she will seek NRC approval on the ranked list. In other news, Ashley recently attended a 3 day Lead Entity Retreat in Chelan, as well as the Salmon Recovery Conference.

The Nisqually Tribe and Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) developed a video using drone technology to highlight the Ohop Valley Restoration Project. Chris shared a draft of the video; it is available here: <https://vimeo.com/131456782>.

Last month, Elizabeth McManus presented on the Alliance for a Healthy South Sound's South Puget Sound Pressures Assessment and Strategic Plan. Chris has agreed to act as liaison between the NRC and AHSS, and provided an update. AHSS is in the early stages of developing a regional recovery strategy, which includes the Nisqually Watershed. Chris noted that the Nisqually has a strategy and vision for how the watershed should function; this is lacking for South Sound and the greater Puget Sound region. Elizabeth's work has been focused on developing that larger vision and strategy. To do that, AHSS has assessed regional planning documents to determine common threads and pressures from those documents. The early pressures analysis has identified a list of common pressures. Chris noted that the regional plan is on a broad level so far, with no geographic areas specified. Example pressures include housing and urban area; commercial areas and ports; wood and pulp plantations, along with many more. Tourism and recreational areas were also identified—Chris was unclear on the reasons it was listed. AHSS is now moving in a second phase to develop specifics around the identified pressures. In the South Sound, the geographic scale will most likely be inlet by inlet, so that meaningful actions can be developed and implemented.

The Nisqually Tribe is a part of a multi-year zooplankton monitoring study. The study 1) monitors available fish food, and 2) establishes a baseline of ecosystem indicators. Zooplankton are sensitive to environmental change and respond quickly to changing conditions. The monitoring efforts provide a real-time pulse of the system and help identify changes such as low oxygen or high temperature. Ideally, the study will help pinpoint causes of zooplankton community changes, like warming temperatures or septic leaks. Chris believes this will be a powerful forecasting tool for salmon returns in coming years. Chris also reported that the NWIFC received BIA money to fund climate change adaptation work, which will be available annually. The Nisqually Tribe hopes to use the money to continue the zooplankton monitoring in the future, and to expand the work to include all Puget Sound Basin Tribes.

The Tribe is continuing to take advantage of transient orcas in South Sound. Scientists are able to make and test hypotheses around the impacts of orca predation on marine mammals, and marine mammal predation on Steelhead. On the other hand, the extremely warm water in Puget Sound introduces a large variable into the process. In fact, the warm water is noticeably stressing Steelhead; they have seen fish mortality due to the tagging efforts and are preparing for pre-spawning mortality. In other news, the weir will be installed in mid-July. However, forecasts predict low fish returns. In California, some rivers have lost an entire year class of salmon. Roger noted that Paradise is the lowest that it has been in 90 years, at less than 290 inches deep.

### **3. NREP Action Projects – Tyler Willey, NREP/WCC Americorps Volunteer**

Tyler is the 2015 NREP Americorps Volunteer, and took the opportunity to update the NRC on the work he's completed thus far in his service year. He is happy to provide more information for those who are curious. The Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) is a branch of Americorps, but is administered by the Department of Ecology. It links young adults to yearlong positions in natural resources fields, either as an Individual Placement (IP) or as a member of a crew. It also provides training opportunities for members, and is a great place for recent high school or college graduates.

Tyler had three main concentrations this year including regularly scheduled projects, like water quality monitoring, tree planting and carcass tossing. He also worked on individual action projects, where he coordinated with interested classes to launch an individual project. Finally, he has completed other WCC requirements too.

Tyler's year started off with a bang. He returned from France, then drove from Chicago to Washington two days later—and stayed under 60 MPH the whole way! During his first week, he was immediately thrown into Water Quality Monitoring week. It was chaotic, but he enjoyed every bit of it, especially meeting teachers he'd work closely with the rest of the year. Tyler also noted that Water Quality Monitoring happens twice a year, with about 1,500 students. All data is compiled in a giant spreadsheet—thanks, Tyler!

Fall concluded with several planting projects at Burwash Farm and the Anderson property. The groups helped install 3,500 plants in all! Tyler enjoyed working with Cris and Charlie, and especially appreciated hearing students reflect on their days. On another note, Tyler led an action project with Weyerhaeuser Elementary school: the students planted 150 live stakes on the school property. During the winter, Tyler was busy with Salmon Carcass Tossing, his favorite field trips ever. Although they couldn't do as many trips this year, he still helped 14 classrooms with their tossings! Additionally, Tyler visited each classroom prior to their field experience so they would understand the importance behind their actions. One of the most rewarding experiences was seeing bald eagles enjoying the salmon carcasses—he counted 20 in one day! Tyler also attended Columbia Crest's Salmon Days to do salmon printing activities with students. In the spring, Tyler led Eye on Nature Trips. During these trips, students visit Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge and conduct NatureMapping and learn ethnobotany.

While not completing field trips or classroom visits, Tyler had WCC requirements to fill, including three trainings at the Cispus Learning Center. He received his wildland firefighters Red Card certification, as well as a Search and Rescue training. In the coming months, he'll job shadow professionals and other WCC members, as well as attend a "spike" exercise to remove invasive species. Ideally, other WCC members will shadow him too.

From here on out, Tyler will help with Summer Teacher Institute and Nisqually Stream Stewards, as well as continuing to work with teachers interested in action projects. His hope is to complete a few projects right as school starts, to get the school year off on the right foot.

Tyler's presentation is available here: <http://www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/my-year-with-the-nisqually-river-education-project-49795067>.

- 4. The Blob, El Nino and the Drought in Puget Sound – Dr. Christopher Krembs, Department of Ecology**  
Dr. Christopher Krembs' expertise is in Oceanography, and works for the marine monitoring unit in the Department of Ecology. Today he will present on the warm water in Puget Sound, and how it might impact fisheries.

To start, the entire west coast of the United States, from Baja, CA to Alaska, is very warm. Although this winter yielded normal levels of precipitation, it fell as rain, not snow. In fact, the Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) was about 30% of normal throughout the Puget Sound Basin; currently, most snow is gone. As a result, winter flows were quite high due to rain, but now, rivers are about 10% of normal flows. The Snoqualmie River, for example, is exhibiting flows normal for July. The Puyallup River hit a record low flow on June 4<sup>th</sup>. However, the Fraser River is running higher than normal; in fact, it has been running higher since October 2014. This is important—it is the largest contributor of fresh water in Puget Sound and has a tremendous impact on the full system. Christopher conducts aerial photography each month as a component of his monitoring; the results are published in Eyes Over Puget Sound. This year, enormous sediment clouds as a result of tidal upwelling were documented.

The "Blob" originated in the Bering Sea in 2013. It is a sea surface blob of warm temperatures; combined with an El Nino event, the blob impacts ocean currents, marine ecosystems and inland weather. In August and September of 2014 the blob was approximately 5 degrees warmer than normal water temperatures. It hit the Washington coast in August. To understand why it hit, Christopher explained that strong upwelling initially pushed the blob off shore; this was largely thanks to the high discharge of the Fraser River. In September, however, river levels decreased and downwelling brought warmer water, with lower nutrients and salinity, into Puget Sound.

The impacts of the blob were large. Slide 15 shows heat anomalies from Willapa Bay to South Sound. His research shows that temperatures have been statistically much higher than normal; at the same time, salinity and oxygen levels have been lower than expected. Christopher explained that water masses are thought about in terms of density, which enables him to mark plots determined by temperatures and salinity. This plotting method shows that over the last 12 months, most cold-water refugia disappeared from Puget Sound. In fact, a water quality-monitoring device attached to the Victoria Clipper has documented areas in Puget Sound reaching over 15 degrees Celsius. This is the temperature that harmful algae blooms love; Christopher has documented many across the region.

Dr. Krembs shared his knowledge and predictions about 2015. In May, the blob was still offshore. NOAA data shows the blob is still 500 km offshore, but with reduced snowpack and freshwater influence to Puget Sound, upwelling is less of a force this year. Because most of the rivers are already very low, the Fraser River is essentially the only river keeping the blob offshore. In addition, if El Nino expresses itself this year, nutrient rich water will be forced even lower. In another scenario, southerly winds may contribute to more on-shore moisture and squalls, but will also contribute to warmer water. In essence, Christopher believes these conclusions can be drawn:

- No matter the wind direction, we can expect a reduced renewal of water in Puget Sound
- Puget Sound water will stay warm
- El Nino may compound the problem
- Different growth patterns for marine species can be expected.

Christopher shared new data about the response of the marine food web. By the end of 2014, energy rich zooplankton species were replaced by southern copepods, as well as by more gelatinous zooplankton. Additionally, there was a record 96% diversion of returning Fraser River sockeye salmon via northern Vancouver Island. The largest toxic algae bloom stretched from central California to British Columbia. Finally, for the first time, Department of Health documented PSP, DSP and domoic acid at the same time.

Christopher shared images from his recent monitoring flights. He is already seeing aggregations of jellyfish, which are normally present in September. He has seen organic material in South Sound, including along the Nisqually Reach. Further, Christopher has documented large Noctiluca algae blooms outside of the Puyallup River. This has led to a new hypothesis: Is Noctiluca a visible harbinger of a food web change?

To stay informed, review the monthly Eyes Over Puget Sound report. Christopher's presentation is available here: <http://www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/the-blob-el-nino-and-drought-in-puget-sound>.

Questions or Comments:

- Roger noted the title of the presentation referred to “drought” but since precipitation amount were normal, he was curious if there was another, more appropriate way to refer to the current conditions. Christopher noted that although not totally accurate, words like “drought” and “the blob” tend to ring with the public.
- Chris Ellings noted that the “resilient ridge” has helped sustain the blob; he was curious about any signs that the conditions might be breaking. Christopher Krembs noted that this question will be intensely monitored over the coming months. However, he believes the blob will remain in place for a while—it has sequestered a lot of heat.
- The group wondered about worse case scenarios. For humans, toxic algae blooms impact food safety and the economy. Salmon populations are doubly hit: poor river water flows lead straight to poor marine water conditions.
- Chris Ellings observed that salmon recovery efforts have occurred in relatively favorable conditions and has still be a huge challenge. However, salmon recovery must now occur under unfavorable conditions.

##### **5. Eatonville Campground Plan – Doug Beagle, Town of Eatonville**

Doug has been the Town Administrator since 2010, and will talk about preliminary plans for the development of a campground in Smallwood Park. Note: this plan has not been adopted or approved by a Town Council; it is still in the early planning phases. Although Eatonville has a number of parks, the Parks Department was dissolved in 2009 due to the economic downfall. Currently, staff from other departments complete the necessary park maintenance duties. Because Doug sees this as a misuse of funding, the Town began looking for other alternatives, like an Adopt-A-Park program, which didn't gain much traction.

In an attempt to increase economic viability, Eatonville has completed projects such as the Visitor's Center, Mashel Avenue and the Bud Blancher Trail. However, Doug noticed a lack of camping availability near the town, which inspired him to explore the possibility of developing a campground in Smallwood Park. The preliminary plan calls for 14 tent sites and 17 RV sites between the existing road and the kid's pond. The close proximity to other Town property could present opportunities to expand trail systems in the area.

The Town conducted a Funding Analysis based on 100 days of operation per year. According to their analysis, the campground could generate \$80,000 per year, and would cost between \$15,000-\$20,000 per year. The current plan calls for a wellhead in the campground; testing will be conducted to determine any influences of groundwater. The campground will also provide water, power and cable to RV sites, and water and outlets to tent sites. In addition, the

Town hired a forester to complete a tree analysis in the park. They determined that some plans will have to be trimmed and others removed due to safety reasons. The trees are very mature and often lose large limbs in the water. In addition, the Town has identified that high water mark and riparian buffer along the Mashel River.

Any plans would still have to complete an extensive permitting process. The Town feels that this would be a “minimal use permit;” if that does not work, the Town will be back to square one. If successful, the project would fund the Parks Department.

Questions/Comments:

- Laura felt that adequate campgrounds are necessary to reduce the costs associated with illegal and damaging camping techniques in areas where camping is not allowed.
- Chris Schutz wondered how the Town would deal with sewage; Doug explained portable toilets would be available until funds could be developed to build a facility. The RV pumping station at the Shell Station would be the closest dumping facility.
- Chris Ellings wondered if the Town would form a stakeholder group. He would love to visit the location and think about how to responsibly maintain the riparian area. The Town has been great partner in salmon recovery efforts, and he is interested in finding ways to make all parties happen. Doug and Chris will coordinate.
- Roger noted that the driver behind the plan appears to be creating revenue, rather than to satisfy a local need for camping. He was also curious about a public comment period; he has concerns about the close proximity of tent sites to the river, and the potential impacts on salmon recovery efforts and eagle roosting trees. Doug noted that the process will soon be opened to stakeholders to provide more input, but the Town plans to complete a little bit more analysis before that time. Public analysis and the development of alternative plans will be components of the overall process.
- Sandra was curious about time constraints and policies on the length of time people will be allowed to camp. Camping will be limited/closed during high flows on the Mashel, and there will be a maximum stay length.
- Karelina suggested moving tent sites further from the river, on the other side of the RV sites.
- Sheila noted that George has told her that Eatonville sites on a shallow groundwater table, and that a professional analysis on groundwater impacts is a great idea.

**6. NWSP Discussion: Economic Viability of Natural Resources – Morgan Greene**

Morgan continued her monthly NWSP report by noting that last year’s Economic Viability of Natural Resources report received very little feedback from NRC members; as such, she has little new information to report. Sandra noted that Hotel/Motel taxes could potentially help fund the Nisqually Sustainable program. Joe was curious about the type of feedback Morgan needed. Essentially, these monthly reports are designed to help the NRC identify ways to progress towards achieving their indicator goals outlined in the NWSP. Feedback or suggestions on how to move forward is much appreciated. Doug noted that the Eatonville Regional Heritage Forum is designed to create means and opportunities for community partners to coordinate and inspire regional development.

**7. For the Good of the Order**

Stephanie will now be supervising half of the Lead Entities through the Puget Sound Partnership.

Construction projects in Tenino and McKenna will likely have major travel impacts through Yelm. Prairie days are also coming up soon; the parade will be on June 25.

The next CAC meeting will be on July 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM.

On June 24<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm, Thurston County will be unveiling a new Pollinator Friendly Garden and highlighting the MOU that bans neonicotinoids. Jurisdictions signed onto to the MOU are Olympia, Nisqually Land Trust, Tumwater, Thurston County and LOTT, and will protect pollinators on over 13,000 acres.

**Adjourn** – Meeting was adjourned at 12:21pm.

***NRC Retreat: Friday, July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
Time and Location TBD***