



Meeting Minutes  
**Nisqually River Council**  
**February 19, 2010, 9am – 12 pm**  
Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge  
Information: 360.438.8715

Attendees:

**Council Members**

**Ron Averill** – Lewis County  
**Joseph Gibbens** – Joint Base Lewis-McChord  
**Cindy James** – WA Dept of Ecology  
**Chris Schutz** – Pierce County SWM

**Mark Swartout** – Thurston County  
**Mark Thibo** – WA DNR  
**David Troutt** – Nisqually Indian Tribe  
**Debbie Young** – Tacoma Power  
**\* CAC Representatives (3)**

**Citizens Advisory Committee Members**

**Fred Michelson\***  
**Steve Pruitt**  
**Kayla Saville**  
**Marjorie Smith\***

**Robert Smith\***  
**Louise Wackerle**  
**Stuart Helzer**

**Guests**

**Roma Call** – Puget Sound Partnership  
**Don Dresser** - Sequalitchew Creek Watershed Council  
**Lori Fait** – Sequalitchew Creek Watershed Council  
**Mike Klass** – Tacoma Rail

**Cara Mitchell** - Sequalitchew Creek Watershed Council  
**Mori Wallner** – Partnership for Water Conservation  
**Steve Wyant** - Sequalitchew Creek Watershed Council

**Staff & Associated Nonprofits**

**Justin Hall** – Nisqually River Foundation  
**Don Perry** – Nisqually Stream Stewards

**Sara Scott** – Nisqually River Council  
**Sheila Wilson** – Nisqually River Education Project

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

**Call to Order** – David T called the meeting to order at 9:10 and welcomed attendees.

**Approval of Minutes** – The minutes were approved as presented.

**Approval of Agenda** – A time added for comments ‘for the good of the order’ was added prior to adjournment. The amended agenda was approved.

## 2. Introductions, Committee Report, Chair Report, Staff Report

### Introductions

#### Advisory Committee Reports –

- *Citizens Advisory Committee* - Steve P reported that the CAC will meet on March 4 at 7pm to nominate officers and to make final preparations for the retreat.
- *Environmental Advisory Committee* – Fred reported that Lawrence Sullivan and Cindy James joined the last meeting to update the committee members on shellfish and TMDL issues. The committee is looking at proposing possible water and forestry element assessments for the Nisqually Watershed Stewardship Plan. Fred is also drafting a letter to the Land Trust to support the inclusion of a small group of wounded warriors in the Annual Land Trust River Float.
- *Economic Advisory Committee* – No report, not presently active.
- *Community Advisory Committee* – Steve P reported that this committee will propose a new focus for the committee at the NRC retreat.

**Chair Report** –David T reported that a major focus of his efforts lately have been on restoring funding for Council staffing, which was eliminated in the 2010 Governor’s Budget. He has been working with Puget Sound Partnership, Bill Ruckelshaus, and David Dicks on identifying an affiliation which could work well for both organizations. David presented a draft of a letter, which will be sent to state senators and legislators asking them to reinstate the funding and support the Nisqually River Council, and asked members to review the document and provide feedback. He also reported that the Tribe will be receiving \$270,000 from the EPA via the Puget Sound Partnership, and he has carved out \$37,500 for funding Council staff for the latter half of 2010. In addition to that work, he is exploring with partner organizations the possibility of developing a community forest in the upper watershed. The Tribe is proposing to be a steward of the first Nisqually community forest.

**Staff Report** – Sara reported that planning is underway for the 2010 retreat, which will be held at the Mineral Lake Event Center in Mineral, WA, on Saturday March 20 from 9:30 – 3:30. She reminded Council members that one focus of this retreat is to review and update the *mission, vision, and goals* of the Nisqually Watershed Stewardship Plan. This planning session will lay the foundation for our efforts into the future, and the participation of all members and affiliates is desired. She informed everyone that PowerPoint presentations from Council & CAC meetings are now available online at [www.slideshare.net/nisqually](http://www.slideshare.net/nisqually). Sara is in the process of ordering materials for the Nisqually Sustainable program, and is working with a local mill to obtain member plaques made from an Ashford cedar. She requested a few volunteers to participate on the 2010 NRC Officer Nominating Committee; Debbie Young, Fred Michelson, Mark Thibo, and Jean Takekawa volunteered (*thank you!*).

### 3. Allied Programs

**Nisqually Land Trust:** Joe Kane reported that the Land Trust closed on an acquisition last month, a 32 acre property which shares a boundary line with Joint Base Lewis McChord. They are also very close to reaching a deal on the next Hancock purchase, a 600 acre parcel, which is being made possible due to tribal funding and close DNR partnerships. Joe also reported that the Land Trust is working with Thurston County on Conservation Futures and the transfer of development rights program. Justin, Joe, and Steve P are on the newly created Pierce County 'Open Space Task Force'. Joe reminded everyone that the Land Trust Auction will be held on March 13.

Joe spoke about efforts to establish a community forest in the Nisqually. No community forests have been established yet on the west coast, but the Nisqually is positioning itself to take this potential forward. The [Forest Legacy Program](#) will have a sister program which will accept proposals in 2012 for large community forests (10,000+ acres). A community forest is a working forest, wildlife habitat, recreation land - whatever the community decides it needs, and Joe first presented the idea to the River Council last winter. The Land Trust, NNRG, the NRF, Stewardship Partners and the Tribe have submitted a grant which, if funded, will provide funds for a conceptualization plan for Community Forests within the Nisqually Watershed.

**Nisqually River Interpretive Center Foundation:** No update.

**Nisqually River Education Project:** Sheila extended gratitude to Don Perry, Mark Thibo, Sara, and Justin for committing to help with GREEN Congress, which will take place on Friday March 19 at the Evergreen State College. She reported that the last salmon toss of the season took place yesterday. Sheila is kicking off the poster contest for the watershed festival and welcomes connections with new Nisqually teachers.

**Nisqually Stream Stewards:** Don Perry reported that he is currently conducting outreach to schools and other places to recruit participants for the 2010 Stream Stewards class which begins in June; 7 people have signed up so far. He'll be working with Stewardship Partners to build raingardens in Eatonville in May, and he is also doing outreach there. Don will be visiting the Ohop valley tomorrow with people from NW Trek who are working on the NatureMapping project.

**Nisqually River Foundation:** Justin reported that the Tribe's 2% program is not available this year, but we can apply in August to receive funds in January. He will be presenting the financials at the April NRC meeting.

4. **Birch Bay Watershed Characterization: Integrating Ecological Protection and Land Use Planning, Margaret Clancy**

Margaret is a consultant with ESA Adolfson who works with Whatcom County. Her presentation represents one community's attempt to develop a better land use management system, working within the existing structure, by moving from a site-by-site reactive system to a proactive, watershed-based system. Birch Bay is in the upper NW corner of Whatcom County and is home to 2nd largest heron rookery in the state. It is also a popular resort destination.

Project Objectives included: identifying areas important for maintaining water flow, water quality and wildlife habitat, determining how these areas have been altered, assessing effects of future build out, and setting priorities for protection, restoration, and development.

The region in questions was looked at through several scales of analysis, including broad scale (priority areas), mid-scale (density/zoning adjustments), and fine scale (development standards, design standards, expedited permit decisions). Methods included a semi-quantitative analysis which provided a relative score for the individual attributes.

Resulting management recommendations included: concentrate developments, allow use of mitigation credits, cluster development, use low impact development. Implementation of these recommendations is expected to: accelerate restoration, increase mitigation effectiveness, promote more sustainable development, expedite permitting, and increase community participation in stewardship goals.

This work was funded through a grant from the EPA, and the county has now received additional funds to implement these recommendations.

Margaret Clancy can be contacted at [mclancy@esassoc.com](mailto:mclancy@esassoc.com). The Birch Bay Watershed Action Plan is available online at [www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pds/naturalresources/specialprojects/birchbaywatershedactionplan.jsp](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pds/naturalresources/specialprojects/birchbaywatershedactionplan.jsp)

Margaret's presentation can be viewed online at [www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/birch-bay-watershed-characterization](http://www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/birch-bay-watershed-characterization).

5. **Sustainable Funding for Nisqually Watershed Planning, Mark Swartout**

Mark Swartout, Natural Resource Program Manager for Thurston County, joined the Council to address options for sustainable funding for Watershed Planning. His presentation closely follows a report he developed for the 2514 Watershed Planning Unit to identify potential funding

sources. Water planning and management is expected to be a major challenge facing our communities in the future.

Nisqually Watershed Planning was funded at 100% for 3 years, and 50% for the last two year; the 50% funding ends June 2011, though the current budget crisis has eliminated funding for 2010/2011 at this time.

There are several direct parallels between the planning unit mission and the Nisqually Watershed Stewardship Plan; you can't have economic or ecologic sustainability without water. The mission of the Nisqually Planning Unit is: *“to maximize the ability of the Nisqually Watershed to produce high quality groundwater and surface water, while protecting and managing the related resources to support environmental, social, economic, and cultural values.”*

Mark listed some of the many studies and reports that have been completed for the Nisqually region from 1999 – present, including: Level 1 Technical Assessment, Upper and Lower Nisqually Watersheds; Level 1 Storage Assessment; Instream Flow Assessment; Water Quality Monitoring Plan; Nisqually Watershed Management Plan, Phase IV Nisqually Implementation Plan, and the Nisqually Watershed Stewardship Plan.

Funding options include a variety of special purpose districts (flood control and drainage districts, clean water districts, aquifer protection districts, stormwater utilities, and public utility districts) and interlocal agreements.

Planning organizations currently active in the Nisqually include:

- Nisqually River Council
- Nisqually River Foundation
- Nisqually Watershed Planning Unit
- McAllister/Yelm Stewardship Coalition
- and possibly a Mashel / Ohop Coalition

Mark noted that the current situation offers significant opportunities for collaboration and the potential to reorganize in way that is more effective for everyone. He proposed that the Nisqually River Foundation provide the basic function of administrative support and communication for all the other groups.

Mark's email address is [swartom@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:swartom@co.thurston.wa.us).

A copy of Mark's paper, 'Sustainable Funding for Nisqually Watershed Planning' can be found on the 'Resources' page of the Council website. <http://nisquallyriver.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Sustainable-Funding-for-NisquallyWatershed-Planning.pdf>.

A copy of Mark's PowerPoint presentation is available online at [www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/sustainable-funding-for-the-nisqually-watershed-planning](http://www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/sustainable-funding-for-the-nisqually-watershed-planning)

## **6. Elbe Unit Management Update, Mark Thibo**

Mark Thibo, the Department of Natural Resource's Assistant Region Manager for South Puget Sound was joined by Ted Keeley, the Elbe Unit Manager.

Mark noted that there has been some concern regarding recent harvests in the upper watershed, and joined us to review the plans for the Elbe Unit from 2005 - 2015. He highlighted the fact that all DNR forest lands in this unit are Forest Stewardship Council certified.

Mark described the DNR's holdings in the upper watershed, including: Elbe Hills State Forest ( 22,200 acres), Tahoma State Forest (32,100 acres), and the Pleasant Valley Block (3300 acres).

Mark reviewed the objectives of the Elbe unit management, which include: support and maintain Northern Spotted Owl populations, provide revenue for trust beneficiaries, meet forest practices Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan (2016 deadline), and provide quality recreational opportunities. Some challenges of the Elbe unit management include: changing science, which is expensive to implement, low values from thinnings and poor markets, expensive repairs, and funding, staffing, and public abuse issues.

Management guidelines for these properties include the Washington State Forest Practice Rules, the 1997 DNR Habitat Conservation Plan, DNR's policy for Sustainable Forests, the SPS 2010 HCP Planning Unit forest land plan, as well as the Forest Stewardship Council and Sustainable Forestry Initiative guidelines.

He mentioned that when the Elbe unit was evaluated by the Forest Stewardship Council certifiers, they stated that the Elbe Unit was one of the best managed forest habitats in the world.

The two harvest techniques used by DNR are Variable Retention Harvest (VRH), which leaves 8-16 trees per acre, either clumped or scattered throughout unit, and Variable Density Thinnings (VDT), which leave a minimum of 53 trees per acre, often more, depending on the management objectives of the particular area. They actively manage with consideration of soft edges, clumped stands, and the placement of roads on benches to preserve viewsheds.

By 2012, most variable retention harvests will have stopped, and variable density thinnings will be conducted at least through 2015.

A copy of the PowerPoint presentation, which includes maps of planned harvest, is available online at [www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/wa-dnr-elbe-unit-management-update](http://www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/wa-dnr-elbe-unit-management-update).

He provided copies of the South Puget HCP Planning Unit Forest Land Plan Final EIS, which is also available online at

[www.dnr.wa.gov/ResearchScience/Topics/SEPANonProject/Pages/amp\\_sepa\\_nonpro\\_flp\\_southpuget.aspx](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/ResearchScience/Topics/SEPANonProject/Pages/amp_sepa_nonpro_flp_southpuget.aspx).

Mark and Ted will be presenting this information to the Upper Nisqually Community Forum at the March 11 meeting.

**7. Comments for the good of the order.**

Members of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, who were onsite to view the estuary restoration, stopped in to say ‘Hello’ to the Council.

Cara Mitchell introduced herself and shared that she is involved with a newly created Sequalitchew Creek Watershed Council, which is advocating for the restoration of Sequalitchew Creek and wetlands in and around DuPont. *Additional information can be found at [www.nisqually-sequalitchew.com/uploads/SequalitchewCreekUpdate\\_09.pdf](http://www.nisqually-sequalitchew.com/uploads/SequalitchewCreekUpdate_09.pdf) or [www.oly-wa.us/nda/](http://www.oly-wa.us/nda/).*

**8. Adjourn** - The meeting was adjourned at 12:11pm.

***Next Meeting: PLANNING RETREAT  
Saturday March 20, 2010, 9:30 – 3:30  
Mineral Lake Event Center, Mineral WA***