



**Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council
September 19, 2014
Nisqually Indian Tribe Natural Resources Department
Information: 360.438.8715**

Attendees:

Council Members

Roger Andrascik – *Mount Rainier National Park*
Bob Burkle – *WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife*
Edna Fund – *Lewis County*
Sandra Romero – *Thurston County*

Rene' Skaggs – *Pierce Conservation District*
David Troutt – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*
*** CAC Representatives (3)**

Citizens Advisory Committee Member

Debbie Anderson
Ed Kenney
Fred Michelson*

Karelina Resnick*
Bob Smith*
Marjorie Smith

Guests

Chris Ellings – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*
JW Foster – *City of Yelm*
Darric Lowery – *WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife*

Martin McCallum – *Stream Steward Volunteer*
David Thorp – *Stream Steward Volunteer*

Staff & Associated Nonprofits

Morgan Greene – *Nisqually River Foundation*
Justin Hall – *Nisqually River Foundation*
Sheila Wilson – *Nisqually River Ed. Project*

James Morrill – *Nisqually Sustainable*
Joe Kane – *Nisqually Land Trust*

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

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order 9:06.

Approval of Meeting Minutes and Agenda – There was a motion to approve the August meeting minutes. They were accepted as written, as was the agenda.

2. Reports

Advisory Committee Reports

- *Citizens Advisory Committee* – Ed Kenney, a long-time CAC member, presented at the last meeting. Ed has been a very important environmental leader in the watershed, and spoke about the importance of marine protection areas throughout the world, with a focus of those in Puget Sound.

The rest of the meeting was spent finalizing the annual agenda for the next 12 months. One of the agenda items is to establish an Emeritus Board for the NRC. Karelina has written a draft mission and purpose for the board. David suggests scheduling an Executive Committee meeting to go over it in more detail. Morgan will set it up.

- *Chair Report* – David has just returned from the annual SRF Board retreat in Winthrop. They toured the Methow Valley in the context of challenges presented by this summer's wildland fires and subsequent floods. Not only is the area covered in ash, riparian areas are destroyed. However the community is committed to salmon enhancement.

The Tribe is preparing for the next round of PSAR Large Project proposals. Last year, they submitted \$80 million worth of grant requests and received \$70 million. This year, they've requested \$150 million; the requests were then all ranked independently. Of all of the projects submitted statewide, the Busywild Community Forest Project ranked as number 1! Related to that, the WWRP proposal for acquisition money was also ranked as number one! This grant will act as a match for the PSAR grant. The team effort that led this project was key to the proposal success, particularly the development of a Steelhead Recovery Plan.

For context, the one of the most significant impacts of the Nisqually Community Forest will be the protection and enhancement of watershed processes along the Mashel River. This includes temperature and sediment regulation, the availability of large woody debris and much more. The community forest also establishes a new concept that places importance on protecting headwater areas that influence downstream spawning grounds. Whereas funding has traditionally funded projects directly adjacent to spawning areas, this now opens doors to protecting areas upstream.

On a related note, David recently attended a presentation given by NOAA scientists. They are currently conducting a 5-year review of all the threatened or endangered species in Puget Sound, including Chinook and Steelhead. Part of the review will examine whether or not the current listings are appropriate. A potential consequence could be Steelhead moving from a threatened to an endangered status. This would mean more regulations and stricter harvesting restrictions, which would impact the Tribe, landowners, and marine fisheries. There will be a public comment period on the plan, which will likely occur during the summer of 2015.

There was a nice article in City Vision about the work the Nisqually Indian Tribe, Nisqually Land Trust and the Town of Eatonville have done along the Mashel River. It can be found here: http://www.awcnet.org/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/Cityvision/CityVision_Feature.pdf.

In the last legislative session, a Senator started to an evaluation of the Puget Sound Partnership to figure out its strengths and weaknesses. Potential conservations may include funding watershed councils, and providing cover for local elected leaders who work to protect shoreline. The result of this evaluation will be a report; NRC members have the potential to be interviewed.

There is a Nisqually River Geographic Response Planning process in the beginning stages. There is a draft available online, and a public comment period. George Walter has been involved with the process and may be available to speak with the NRC.

- *Staff Report* – Morgan has been continuing her work on climate adaptation planning. Her first draft is due on October 7th and the full report is due November 18th. Along with her team, she has four goals to share today:
 - Restore and maintain forest cover that is healthy, resilient and widespread so that it provides extensive recreation, economic, ecological and cultural benefits.
 - Maintain healthy freshwater ecosystems that support thriving native fish populations while providing cultural, economic, social benefits
 - Enhance the river delta so it thrives as an ecosystem and recreational area
 - Provide sustainable funding and strong partnerships in order to successfully implement climate adaptation activities

She would love any feedback on these goals. In the meantime, she and the team are working to develop strategies, objectives and actions, which she will share with the NRC at a later date.

Morgan also was a part of the Ohop fish-out at the end of last month, helped the Tribe with monitoring, and is busy preparing for the Nisqually Watershed Festival and Eatonville Salmon Fest. Lastly, her Americorps position ends at the end of September after which she'll be a full time member of the NRF crew.

Allied Programs

- *Nisqually Land Trust* – The biggest news is the Nisqually Community Forest project ranking! However it is also Conservation Week in Thurston County. The NLT was recognized as one of five conservancies in the county. Sandra noted that the work is not easy. Some cases take a tremendous amount of problem solving and compromise, especially when weighing the consequences of subdivisions, working forests, and land easements.

The NLT had their annual meeting last week. During the meeting, they celebrated their 25th anniversary by recognizing volunteers who have put in at least 25 hours this year. Twenty-six volunteers have met the challenge thus far—all others have until the end of the year. The prize is a t-shirt! Additionally, the land trust is in the middle of their strategic planning process.

Joe also learned the Mineral Lake grant proposal did not go through, although they were still ranked second. It was a \$6.5 million proposal, and would have required a \$1 million match. It's encouraging to know the project ranked so highly.

In other news, Yelm City Council will also be making a proclamation celebrating the land trust on Tuesday, September 23rd at 6pm in the Public Safety Building.

As of yesterday morning, Joe reached agreement with Hancock Timber Co. regarding the purchase of 200 acres of wetlands above Upper Ohop Lake. This project will be in the next round of PSAR requests and will provide a good buffer to NW Trek.

On a separate note, David suggested brainstorming ways to become involved with legislative discussions. This will be an agenda topic at an upcoming meeting.

- *Nisqually River Education Project* – Sheila has a busy start to the new school year! She has nearly 50 teachers in the program this year. There was a lot of teacher turnover in Yelm, but Sheila is hopeful that many new teachers will be excited to get involved. She also recruited six new teachers from JBLM!

Water Quality Monitoring Training is September 20th at Tumwater Falls Park, and Fall Water Quality Monitoring day is on October 16th. She needs volunteers for the half-day event! Additionally, most tree planting trips have been scheduled, though fish carcass tossing trips may need to be cancelled. Plantings will occur at the Anderson Property and in the Ohop Valley Restoration Site. On a side note, the Tribe will set up wildlife cameras around salmon carcass tossing sites so students can view the animals that benefit from the dead salmon.

The new AmeriCorps position starts on October 6th, and Sheila is interviewing for an intern from the Masters of Environmental Sciences program at TESC. There is also funding this year to conduct research on the effectiveness of the NREP program.

The Watershed pledge, and all other materials are on the new NREP website (www.nrep.nisquallyriver.org). Funding wise, Sheila will be reapplying for the Ecology 319 grant, as well as the public participation grant.

- *Nisqually River Foundation* – Justin has been busy the last month. He attended the Ohop fish-out, conducted Americorps interviews, and is continuing work with Jim Wilcox and Bryan Bowden to establish a fish trail on the Wilcox property. Right now, they are simply determining what details will be involved in establishing the trail. Bryan will likely finish the preliminary plan within the next month, which will then be shared with the NRC.

Justin has also been helping the Friends of the Refuge. Laws regarding the relationship between refuge staff and the Friends group changes recently, and Justin has been working to make the transition smoother.

The Nisqually Watershed Festival is next week, and volunteers are needed! Sign up with Michael Schramm at Michael_Schramm@fws.gov!

Finally, there were two Alliance for a Healthy South Sound meetings last week. Topics included shellfish programs and the Puget Sound Partnership Pressures Assessment.

- *Nisqually Sustainable* – James was contracted by NRF to coordinate the Nisqually Sustainable program until the end of the year. He has focused on recruiting new businesses and appealing to the ecotourism industry. So far, he's had great response from the lodges surrounding Mount Rainier. Additionally, the Mount Rainier Visitors Association is very interested in promoting the program.

There will be a six-session workshop for Nisqually Sustainable members. It will take place at the end of October through the beginning of November. The workshops will deal with a variety of topics, all designed to help businesses become more sustainable. One workshop will take place at Left Foot Farms, which will serve as a demonstration area for other farmers who are interested in becoming Salmon Safe or EnviroStars certified.

James also produced a two-minute promotion video for the program with help from Anne Ferguson. The video will be available on the website, along with two business showcase videos. A link will be provided soon.

- *Stream Stewards* – Don was unable to attend today's meeting. However, he had a very successful Stream Steward class this year, along with the annual Salmon Camp. The Salmon Camp allows tribal youth to spend the day with the tribe's natural resources staff. Activities included beach seining, riding on tribal boats among much more. The goal is to provide a better understanding of what the Natural Resources Department does.

He and Sayre Hodgson are collaborating on the annual Salmon Watcher Training. The first training is on September 20th. It has become a very strong program within the watershed; it's hard for the Natural Resources staff to monitor all areas of the watershed. Salmon Watchers provide additional eyes and help determine where salmon are spawning.

- *Salmon Recovery Update* – Besides the Busywild grant success, another success worthy of note is that the tribe is ranked number one for a project through the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program. The ESRP funds nearshore and estuary projects in Puget Sound.

For background, the tribe received an ESRP grant several years ago to examine the physical structure of the river delta. They learned that the sediment supply upstream is not adequate to support the delta, because it is all caught at the dam. Combined with the threat of sea level rise, this presents several challenges. Without sufficient sediment, it will be difficult to maintain an estuary ecosystem. Now, the Tribe has submitted a new proposal to ESRP to continue modeling the progression of sea level rise, sediment transport and delta conversion. This will use adaptive management and will be the first major step towards delta restoration in light of changing conditions.

The South Sound Science Symposium is coming up in late October. Chris will be speaking on the topic of delta research and response of the fish. It's \$25 to register, and is a great way to learn regional science.

Water is flowing through half of the new Ohop Creek channel and crews are getting ready to plant. The remaining portion of the channel will be dug next year; water tables were too high to complete work this year. A plant placing will be held in the coming weeks. There was also an article in the News Tribune about the project. It can be found here:

http://www.thenewstribune.com/2014/09/01/3357231_major-phase-of-ohop-creek-restoration.html?rh=1.

The fish-out yielded good results. Species encountered included Coho, big mouth bass, and lamprey. Overall, around 7,000 specimens were rescued! Additionally, the wildlife cameras in the first phase of the restoration are showing rewarding progress. The trees in the area are large, and wildlife captured includes fox, coyote, and more. The pictures are along the Tribe's internal drive, but they will put together some pictures to share with others. A highlight reel will be developed this winter.

The tribe now has a drone, which they will use to fly the Ohop Valley to track progress. Other projects could include flying over the new Nisqually Community Forest.

The Governor's Salmon Recovery Office is doing their 2014 Salmon Recovery Report and will be highlighting the Nisqually. It will be presented here. Lastly, Jim Wilcox was just appointed to the Puget Sound Partnership's Leadership Council.

3. Harvest Management – David Troutt, Nisqually Indian Tribe

Harvest management can be a difficult concept to grasp, but is essential to salmon recovery. The fundamental concept is that harvest management is ultimately productive, so it assumes that one return fish produces one spawner. It is also based on finding a balance between the returns and spawners. Essentially, for every fish produced above a 1:1 return/spawner ratio, there's an opportunity for harvest. To be clear, this is for wild fish.

Hatcheries are a different story. Hatcheries are very productive on the returns side, and have a very low spawning rate. In the Nisqually, this becomes a big challenge because there are both natural and hatchery fish. However, the harvest management and salmon recovery programs base their decisions on the natural fish return.

Management is based on a number of influences, but the two that are most important are the number of hatchery fish vs. the number of natural fish on the spawning grounds. In the last 7 years, the hatchery run size is about 30,000 while natural is less than 2,000. The weir is a tool used to try to manage for this, by capturing hatchery fish and releasing wild fish. In another context, roughly 5% of the catch is native fish and the rest is hatchery.

One of the difficulties in management is to mesh goals of sustainable harvesting while also recovering native fish runs. The long-term harvest goal is 10,000-15,000 Chinook and the long-term exploitation rate goal on natural Chinook is 47%. Currently, around 2,200 fish reach the spawning grounds each year, with approximately 73% as hatchery fish. Likewise, the current exploitation rate on natural fish is 52%. It will reach the goal of 47% by 2016.

In order to sustainably reduce the fisheries size, David has worked with fishermen to develop tools to selectively harvest fish. This selective gear includes tangle nets instead of gill nets. So far, these techniques have occurred for the last three years, on even years only. Odd years feature pink salmon runs that make selective fishing infeasible. However, this poses another challenge in including all fishermen: while selective fishing works well for drift net techniques, those who utilize set net fishing are excluded. It is important to include all voices, which maintaining cultural integrity.

Another challenge in harvest management is linked to the way the U.S. measures fish stocks. All stocks, including large stocks from the Columbia River, are all considered in determining harvesting levels. This

leaves small river basins, like the Nisqually, in a more difficult position. However, David is trying to change the conversation to the perspective of river basins instead of ocean levels.

In addition, climatic patterns play an enormous role. This year warm water off the coast of Canada likely changed fish migration patterns and may have played a role in the low number of returning Chinook salmon. The fish most likely swam along the inside of Vancouver Island, leading to high catchment rates from British Columbian fisheries. The poor water conditions may also have proved fatal. This may be an aspect of climate change, and may foreshadow future conditions.

In the long-term, the goal is to enhance natural fish with at least 500 fish spawning above the weir. The first step is to remove hatchery fish from the system, to support a fully functioning watershed, and to increase the number of native fish. Especially in the Nisqually River, the idea is to enhance natural fish. Although Chinook may be removed from the endangered species list in the future, the Nisqually River will likely be managed under a plan similar to the Chinook Recovery plan forever.

David's presentation is available on the NRC's slideshare account.

4. NWSP Discussion – Sustainable Businesses; Update: Community Wellness

Today's NWSP Discussion revolves around sustainable businesses, with an update on community wellness. With James' frequent updates on local sustainable businesses in the Nisqually Sustainable program, Morgan will dedicate most of today's discussion to an update on Community Wellness.

After her initial report, Morgan had the opportunity to speak with Amy Ellings, the Healthy Eating Active Living Program Manager with the Department of Health. Amy shared several potential ways that the NRC could become more involved with promoting local foods in the watershed and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

- The biggest barriers in getting local and high quality food to people are affordability, distribution, funding and processing.
 - Affordability: Although many people are eligible for assistance through the WIC program, redemption rates are low. Only about 50% of qualified tribal members take advantage of the program. The NRC could promote the WIC program.
 - Distribution: Many organizations are working to create food hubs, Farm to School programs or Farm to Hospital programs. In each case, local organizations work with local or regional farms to bring foods to community areas. Additionally, many organizations are adopting healthy food policies, which limits the amount of unhealthy food available in the work place. It is also a possibility to partner with rural convenience stores to bring fresh foods into places that are lacking in availability.
 - Funding: This is always a big issue, but many grants are now available to help rural or impoverished communities bring local and healthy food to their stores.
- Increased involvement is also a big step in encouraging the consumption of healthier foods. Some of the biggest challenges are to decrease the foreign feeling around certain fruits and vegetables. By providing information on the food available, people are more likely to experiment with it. Amy also suggested moving farm stands or markets to community centers, child-care facilities or senior centers. These are places where community members already visit frequently, and can make it easier to reach a large demographic.
- Other ways the NRC could get involved are by having representation on the Puget Sound Regional Food Policy Council, the Thurston Food Systems Council, or the Food Systems Round Table. The latter has 30 seats available, and is lacking tribal and community input. Amy has contact information for all three groups if the NRC is interested in getting involved.
- Ways the NRC could get more involved:
 - Ed suggests advertising extra food throughout the watershed to reduce waste produced.
 - There is not a regional/watershed network of food producers. Likewise, there is not a truck available to move food around. Perhaps this could be established.

5. For the Good of the Order

NW Trek is having NatureMapping tomorrow from 9-12 at Powell Creek. The Land Trust is hosting a weed pull in Ohop on Wednesday from 9-12, meeting at Petersen Farm. Additionally, the land trust is hosting a nature walk tomorrow in the Ohop Valley.

Native Plant Salvage Project is hosting a plant sale on September 28th from 11-4. On Monday, the monthly Thurston coffee chat is happening, with this month's topic on master gardeners. The meeting in Rainier will be at the community garden.

The Fisher Environmental Assessment is out at Mount Rainier and public comment is accepted until October 15th.

6. Depart for tour of the Weir

Adjourn – Meeting was adjourned at 11:48am.

*Next Meeting: Friday, October 17, 2014, 9:30am – 12:30pm UW Pack Forest
NWSP Topic: Integrated Communities; Update: Ecosystem Functions*