



Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council Meeting
June 17, 2016
Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge
Information: 360.438.8715

Attendees:

Council Members

Amy Cruver – *Pierce County*

JW Foster – *City of Yelm*

Amber Martens – *JBLM*

Glynnis Nakai – *BFJ NNWR*

Rene' Skaggs – *Peirce Conservation District*

Gary Stamper – *Lewis County*

Stephanie Suter – *Puget Sound Partnership*

Sandra Romero – *Thurston County*

*** CAC Representatives (3)**

Citizens Advisory Committee Members

Phyllis Farrell*

Fred Michelson

Steve Pruitt*

Lois Ward

Guests

Roger Andrascik – *Nisqually Land Trust & Stream Stewards*

Martin McCallum – *Nisqually Land Trust & Stream Stewards*

Brian Sullivan – *Nisqually Land Trust/Pierce Conservation District*

Chris Schutz – *Pierce County*

Sierra Smith – *Center for Natural Lands Management*

Ashley Von Essen – *Nisqually Indian Tribe*

Staff & Associated Nonprofits

Morgan Greene – *Nisqually River Council*

Justin Hall – *Nisqually River Foundation*

Aleks Storvick – *Nisqually River Ed. Project*

Sheila Wilson – *Nisqually River Ed. Project*

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

Call to Order – Sandra called the meeting to order at 9:07 am.

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

2. Reports

Advisory Committee Reports

- *Citizens Advisory Committee* – Steve offered the report. He noted that the CAC approved a new mission statement and set of goals for the next 1-2 years at their last meeting. The CAC is not asking for action from the NRC today, but appreciates any feedback. A vote of approval from the NRC will be requested at the July retreat. Long time CAC member Marjorie Smith suffered a heart attach several weeks ago. She is home and recovering; a card is available to sign in the back for those who are interested.

Stephanie wondered if the CAC should add language explaining that it acts as the Citizens Advisory Group for the Lead Entity project approval process; however, it is the Council itself that acts as the citizens group for that process.

- *Chair Report* – David was not available to provide a report.
- *Staff Report*– Morgan reported that the Nisqually River Water Trail planning committee hosted an Open House on June 9th and will host another on Monday July 18th in Eatonville. A draft plan is available on the NRC website. The Nisqually Stream Stewards class has reached its 30-person capacity already this year, with another 20 people on the waiting list. Morgan is pleased to announce that half of last year's volunteers have reached their 40-hour volunteer commitment.

Allied Programs

- *Nisqually Land Trust* – JW offered the NLT report. The NLT Board met last night for their monthly meeting. The summer Nisqually River floats will be on July 24th and 25th; seats are \$115 each. The

annual meeting will be on September 18th at Oddfellows Park. This event isn't a fundraiser, but a social event featuring a salmon BBQ and a chance to celebrate the work of the Land Trust.

- *Nisqually River Education Project* – NREP has finished its field trips for the school year. New this year, Sheila sent a letter to school principals to thank them for their commitment to the program, and describes how NREP helps teachers meet their requirements. In the 2015-2016 school year, over 1,100 students and 190 volunteers monitored water quality at 30 water quality sites in the watershed. 844 students and 177 adults planted over 3,500 native trees and shrubs for the benefit of salmon. 215 NREP students attended the 24th annual student GREEN Congress and almost 400 students participated in Eye On Nature field investigations. Finally, over 750 students participated in Nisqually Nearshore Field Studies. Summer Teacher Institute will be on June 27, 28, and 29th and has been expanded from 40 to 56 teachers. Of that, 25 teachers will be invited to join a Climate Leaders Fellowship, an opportunity to help teachers integrate climate curriculum into their classrooms. Fellows will meet 4 times per year to learn from their peers. Roger wondered if Sheila shares the numbers with the media; she works with Emmett O'Connell to share information, though hasn't necessarily shared details on the End of the Year data.
- *Nisqually River Foundation* – Justin has continued his participation in the Pierce Conservation District Advisory Committee, which in part, examined ways to take advantage of a new rate program. The process was scheduled to take 6 months, but the group wrapped up in 5. The Community Forest Board is working to purchase the first 3 sections of the forest this year. Justin, Paula Swedeen, and Kirk Hansen spent the beginning of this week in the proposed sections measuring trees; the land is in good shape.
- *Salmon Recovery Update* – Ashley offered the report. She is continuing to work on the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRF Board) and Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) projects. Nine projects were submitted, and 8 have moved forward. Ashley and Cathy hosted site visits to project locations on June 1; the reviewers had no major concerns on the projects at the time, and official comments will be provided in the next week. The next Habitat Work Group is on July 6th to develop two ranked project lists, one for SRF Board and one for PSAR. These lists will be brought to the NRC for approval at the July NRC retreat. The final applications are due on August 12th. Ashley also went to Lake Chelan last week to represent the Nisqually Watershed at the Washington Salmon Coalition, a meeting of Lead Entity Coordinators from around the state, to share best practices. Festival planning season has begun; the planning committees welcome anyone interested in planning or volunteer at these events. The Nisqually Watershed Festival will be on September 24th and the Eatonville Salmon Festival will be October 15th.

3. **South Sound Conservation Nursery** – *Sierra Smith, Center for Natural Land Management*

Sierra thanked the NRC for the opportunity to speak to the group. Sierra currently runs the South Sound Nursery Program, and collaborates with the Sustainability in Prisons program to provide the seeds necessary for prairie restoration. South Sound Prairies are a rare ecosystem: about 10% of original prairielands remain and less than 3% is in pristine shape. These lands support 4 endangered or threatened species, Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, golden paintbrush, streaked horned lark, and the mazama pocket gopher. Sierra noted that most the remaining prairielands—including those in pristine conditions—are on JBLM. The prairies were created about 15,000 years ago as glaciers receded. They were maintained by Native Americans who burned the prairies frequently, until about 150 years ago. Most of that land has converted to forests, agriculture, or development since then.

The Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM) restores prairie to increase plant and animal diversity, because most prairies are overwhelmed by Scot's Broom and/or Douglas Fir. Restoration is a 3-step process: weed removal, prescribed burning, and reseeding. Weed removal can be done through manual, mechanical, or chemical methods. Reseeding can be completed through broad application of seeds or by installing plant plugs. The South Sound Conservation Nursery Project was developed because the limiting factor in prairie restoration was typically a lack of seeds. Partners include CNLM, JBLM, and others. The nursery has 65 raised beds and several greenhouses. What started as a backyard volunteer project now produces 350,000 plants annually and 2,000 pounds of seeds. For some plants that's up to 20 million seeds per ton! Volunteers collect seeds from prairies so that plants raised at the nursery are one generation removed from their native source. This keeps genetic diversity high. Harvesting is completed through manual or mechanical methods. Although the nursery is close to meeting demand, prairie restoration programs are expanding rapidly; Sierra is looking for an additional 5-20 acre farm with well draining soils.

The conservation goals of the program are to protect property, build habitat, and reintroduce rare species. CNLM focuses on the four endangered/threatened species. Their strategy is to put property into protected status through

easements or acquisition. After restoring habitat as described above, CNLM can reintroduce rare species to the prairies. Sandra remembered a recent report on the Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly reintroduction program; it is available here: <http://goo.gl/etS2JJ>. Earthfix is also producing a piece related to this.

Sierra noted that an important component of restoration is viewing different land uses through a cooperation lens, not as competitive. For instance, CNLM and JBLM have forged a unique partnership to promote conservation on military lands. Other solutions lie in multi-use land examples like Sentinel Landscapes (a partnership of the Dept. of Interior, Dept. of Defense, and U.S. Dept. of Agriculture), Natural Resources Conservation Service, and combining grazing with prairie restoration (as practices at Colvin Ranch). Sierra encouraged NRC members to visit restored prairies throughout the area, including Mima Mounds and Glacial Heritage. There are volunteer opportunities each Tuesday at the prairies, nursery, or other locations. His presentation is available here: <http://www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/south-sound-conservation-nursery>.

Sandra wondered if efforts to protect Taylor's Checkerspot Butterflies are successful. Sierra noted the conservation goal is to have a self-sustaining population on the prairie; this is especially successful on JBLM. In general, most sites are trending to recovery but haven't reached it yet. Phyllis wondered if larvae predation is of concern. Sierra shared that this is increasingly being considered an important concept. Martin shared that the Capitol Land Trust are acquiring lands that will be adjacent to CNLM lands along the Deschutes River. Rene' wondered if any prairie conservation programs were open to private landowners. Right now, the sentinal landscape is a pilot program and is not open to private landowners. NRCS is the best option. Roger wondered if a minimum acreage was needed for prairie restoration—the NLT has several properties that might be good candidates. Sierra noted that this depends on the conservation goals. JW will follow up with Kim to explore potential partnerships. Amy wondered if CNLM burned during certain times of the year. CNLM burns within specific windows and is impacted by burn bans. Amber clarified that JBLM is not held to the same regulations as state burn bans, but takes into consideration smoke impacts on surrounding communities. She noted that wildfires often burn on JBLM at the same time. All prescribed burn maps are posted on the JBLM Sustainability webpage.

4. Pierce Conservation District Programs – Rene' Skaggs, Pierce Conservation District

The conservation district is a non-regulatory sub-division of state government established after the dust bowl to provide free assistance with natural resources management and protection. Over the years, the Districts have branched out to include multiple programs that vary regionally. Today, there is a district in nearly every county in the US; Washington conservation districts largely focus on water quality. Pierce Conservation District (PCD) has multiple programs, including agricultural assistance; habitat improvement and environmental education; water quality improvement and monitoring; harvest Pierce County; and the annual Native Plant Sale. PCD is funded through a rate system, member jurisdictions, grant funding, and contracts. Each Pierce County taxpayer contributes to the rate system, currently at a rate of less than \$5 per parcel.

The Agricultural Assistance Program works to prevent mud and water contamination from entering waterways. The program includes educational workshops and tours, farm visits and individualized recommendations, farm management plans, financial assistance to implement practices, and equipment rental and soil sampling programs. PCD also is a venue of information for landowners on various county resources or programs. An example of the tools offered through the program includes mobile poultry processing units, with hands-on training provided.

The Habitat Improvement and Environmental Education Program involves youth education, volunteer labor, educational workshops, Eagle Scout projects, Stream Steward volunteers, knotweed eradication programs, and shoreline programs. PCD's Volunteer Coordinator was recently promoted to a full time position to recognize the importance of environmental education. PCD's Stream Stewards monitor a specific stream to monitor data, weed, and keep an eye on planting projects. PCD has almost finished the monitoring of knotweed along the Nisqually mainstem, and are starting to shift to maintenance mode. The shoreline program is coming soon: a PCD technician is getting trained on bulkhead replacement and restoring marine shorelines.

The Water Quality Improvement and Monitoring Program focuses on non-point source pollution education to Pierce County residents. This includes volunteer water quality monitoring; educational workshops, presentations and displays; raingarden assistances; volunteer storm drain marking; the de-pave program; rain barrel workshops; and storm drain stenciling.

Harvest Pierce County builds the capacity of community gardens to create a strong network of food access. Though the main tenant is community gardens, the program includes farm gleaning, classes and workshops, urban fruit harvest, and veggie co-ops. Farm gleaning works with crop producers to send extra food to local food banks after the harvest. Anyone can get involved with this: people who have an excess of produce can request volunteers to take the food to the food bank. The veggie co-op gets produce into local school districts.

The Annual Native Plant Sale was started by conservation districts years ago. The plants are low cost, high quality for community uses, and are ideal for district restoration and rain garden projects. Components of the program are native plant educational workshops and Fort Lewis Ponderosa Pine program. PCD has been working with JBLM to collect ponderosa pine seeds; it helps to increase the amount of Ponderosas in the western slope, and is a genetically diverse species than those on the eastern side. The annual plant sale is usually the last weekend in February. Pre-orders are taken beginning in October.

Rene' noted that the Advisory Committee was crucially important in developing a strategic plan for the PCD. If a rate increase happens, PCD wants to use the increased funds in the most meaningful way possible, as informed by the community. If it happens, the second year of the rate would be to hire a crop specialist to fill a void in services offered. Chris thinks PCD has done an exceptional job in changing their operations to reflect the community and fill voids/meet needs. Rene's presentation is available here: <http://www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/pierce-conservation-district-dedicated-to-helping-pierce-county-residents-since-1949>.

5. Pacific Northwest Climate Leaders Webportal – Sheila Wilson, Aleks Storvick

In NREP's new NOAA grant, one of the deliverables is the development of a climate literacy webportal. Teachers and students, along with all NRC members, are invited to participate in the webportal to learn more about the project. Aleks is this year's NREP Americorps volunteer. A large component of his work has been to develop the webportal, which can be found at www.climate.nisquallyriver.org. He is eager to receive any feedback on the site, especially before Summer Teacher Institute begins in 2 weeks. The website is broken into sections for students and teachers. The webportal will also include blog posts, and will be a part of a larger social media campaign that uses Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and Youtube. Please share any thoughts with Aleks (aleks@nisquallyriver.org).

6. For the Good of the Order

This is Chris Schutz's last official NRC meeting. Thank you for your dedication!

Glynnis announced that on Tuesday July 19th there is a re-naming celebration at the Refuge, as a part of the Share Your Story Act by Denny Heck. It will be similar to the naming of the Norm Dicks Visitors Center, with Sally Jewel, Denny Heck, Willy Frank and other speakers. The event starts at 11:00 AM, and might go as long as 12:30 PM. Invitations will be mailed on Monday. Glynnis will provide agenda details to Morgan. There will be another ceremony on July 31st as a part of the Nisqually Indian Tribe's Canoe Journey. This event is coordinated by the Tribe; the details are still to be determined, but Glynnis will provide updates as available via Morgan.

Brian shared details on a PCD project on the conversion of Meeker Ditch to Meeker Creek. It is similar to the Ohop Valley Restoration Project, in collaboration with the City of Puyallup.

Sandra shared that Thurston County has a proposal on a septic system management program that was unanimously recommended by an Advisory Committee. The NRC, or individual agencies, may want to send a letter. More information is available through Art Stary (starrya@co.thurston.wa.us or 360-867-2587). Chris mentioned the PSP Near Term Actions process included a South Sound wide collaboration between the Shellfish Protection Districts to work together to make a bigger impact on clean up.

Sandra also mentioned that the Urban Growth Area plan has been updated. In part, it updated the number of hives people can have.

Adjourn – Meeting was adjourned at 12:00pm.

Next Meeting: Friday, July 15, 2016
Ohop Valley, 10:00-2:00
NWSP Topic: None; NRC Retreat