Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council Meeting
June 15, 2018
Ashford Fire Station
Information: 360.438.8715

Attendees:

Council Members:

Molly Carmody – City of Yelm
Amy Cruver – Pierce County Council
Matt Curtis – WDFW
Amber Martens – JBLM
David Troutt – Nisqually Indian Tribe

Citizens Advisory Committee Members:

Phyllis Farrell
Fred Michelson
Marjorie Smith
Robert Smith
Lois Ward

Guests:

Joe Chavez – DNR Rec Manager
Roger Andrascik – NLT/NSS
Chris Ellings – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Molly Olson – Cornell College
Andrew Reed – DNR
Etsuko Reistroffer – NLT/NSS
Jim Reistroffer – NLT/NSS
Lee Roach – DNR
Shannon Shula – Thurston County Planning
Ted Jackson

Staff:

Brandon Bywater – NRF
Justin Hall – NRF
Emily McCartan – NRF
Sheila Wilson – NRF

1. **Call to Order, Introductions, Approval of Minutes and Agenda**
   David called the meeting to order at 9:13am. Phyllis moved to approve the minutes. Fred seconded. The minutes were approved, as was the agenda for the day.

2. **Committee Reports and Updates**
   <u>Advisory Committee Reports</u>
   Citizens Advisory Committee – Phyllis Farrell
   The CAC met on Tuesday and elected officers for the coming year. Phyllis is the CAC Chair, Lois is vice chair, and Phyllis (ex officio), Lois and Fred are the voting NRC members with Ed and Bob as alternates. The CAC discussed plastics, aquaculture lawsuits, salmon recovery, Thurston County mineral lands, and Alder Dam. Fred highlighted that the CAC has been following a lawsuit filed by citizen groups in Zangle Cove, over HPA permit exemptions for aquaculture. Aquaculture and geoduck farms now occupy a quarter of the tidelands in Puget Sound. There is a hearing set for today.

   Chair Report – David Troutt
   David has attended an Orca Task Force Prey subgroup meeting (in his tribal natural resources capacity). NOAA presented on orca behavior and feeding habits in Puget Sound, expecting a

report soon on which salmon stocks are most critical for orca prey. South Sound fall Chinook will probably not be at the top of the list – they come at a time when there are other fish present. Expect to find that springtime stocks are most critical, from Nooksack, Skagit, and White River, because November to May is the starving time for orcas. NOAA's historic estimate of smolt production in Puget Sound, pre-treaty/settlement, was 400-600 million smolts per year. Outmigration timing was very wide, between February through October, and returning adults came back from May through November. Currently, we're producing about 400-600 million smolts a year, but the vast majority are hatchery produced, and therefore highly concentrated in time. Smolts leave in an approximately 2-week timeframe in May, and they come back in a short window as well (July-mid-August/September). So while the Sound is producing a similar number of fish, strategically, the timing is very different. David thinks part of the solution will be to broaden the spread to recreate that timeframe, for orcas and for a more resilient ecosystem. This approach aligns with the recovery program to reestablish a natural run that has more variation in in- and out-migration. The Orca Task Force has three workgroups (prey, toxics, and noise/vessel traffic), with recommendations due back to the Governor's appointed Task Force by October 1. Everything is on the table, including Snake River dams, stormwater, and hatchery production, and it will come down to cost-benefit analysis of identifying where we can have the greatest impact. Increasing habitat does make a lot of sense – 25% of fish we catch in the Nisqually estuary are from other places, because they come here from Puyallup and White River where there are no estuaries.

The Treaty Tribes prevailed in the culvert case in a 4-4 decision in the US Supreme Court, which accepted the 9th Circuit decision without comment, affirming a duty under the treaty to protect habitat for salmon for the tribes. It's as good an outcome as we could have hoped. It will have a direct impact on culverts, hopefully expediting the state's repair and replace efforts. Impact for riparian and nearshore habitats remains to be seen. David's personal interpretation is that the judgment applies to habitat generally, regardless of state/local/federal jurisdiction. Rather than fight over it, we should focus on fixing it. Matt noted that in most of the South Sound, there are far more private culverts than state/local ones. WDFW permitting process tries hard to limit the lifespan of private barrier culverts. Phyllis asked for information from Thurston County about their work, which she believes is ahead of legal requirements, and Shannon will get back with specific information. Bob noted that at least 3 culverts have been totally reworked in the last 5 years by the county. David stated that they can make an immediate difference to coho and steelhead.

Staff Report – Emily McCartan
Emily is continuing to work on the NWSP report, and planning next month's NRC retreat.

Per the Council's request last meeting, she has circulated a draft letter to local governments requesting action on plastic waste.

- Molly clarified that Yelm and Roy are not included in Thurston County's ban on plastic bags – Yelm opted out and Roy is in Pierce County. Molly is pushing to get Yelm to either ban or put a fee on them. The current makeup of City Council may be more favorable to restrictions than when the issue came up previously, and it feels like there is some traction. Molly has suggested a fee on plastic bags for Yelm which could be used to further city investment in sustainable things like solar panels.

- Molly moved to send to Yelm, Roy and Eatonville. The motion was adopted.
- Other entities could include (with further research and modifications as needed):
    - Mount Rainier National Park (Roger advised that the concessionaire may offer plastic bags. Plastic water bottles had been banned, but the current administration reversed and allowed them again.
    - Refuge
    - JBLM – Cathy Hamilton-Weissner might know more about how the Sustainability Plan addresses plastics and recycling. The Commissary offers a choice of paper or plastic. Can discuss who else after Yelm.
    - Nisqually Reservation
    - School districts

Many also feel that education and public messaging about plastic waste and recycling would be very helpful for reducing use.

Thurston County Subarea Plan – Shannon Shula
Shannon introduced herself as the new county staff liaison on Nisqually and asphalt issues. Celinda is moving away and the Subarea Plan project will be on hold until a new staffmember is hired. Shannon is taking over the Herrera/Recycled Asphalt study, which is still moving forward. Herrera has finished the first phase and is working on the contract for phase 2, which will look more at the literature. Next public meeting is not scheduled yet, probably this fall. The Comprehensive Plan Update has also slowed, as the county works through mineral lands issues, which need to be done first. Current timeline hopes to be done by late 2019/early 2020. Fred asked for more information on the mineral lands designation for the next CAC.

Allied Program Reports
Nisqually Land Trust – Roger Andrascik
NLT has closed on the Spooner property (60 acres in the Powell Creek Protected Area, Thurston side of the Nisqually shoreline). The Spooners grew raspberry root stock there for about a decade but stopped farming the land about three years ago. Property will be restored; Chris Ellings can describe the potential for restoring the channel migration zone.

NLT is closing today on Villanueva property, located in the Lower Reach of the Nisqually River, approximately 1.6 miles above I-5. It totals 35 acres, most of which is forested floodplain. It includes approximately 3,500 feet of river shoreline, the southerly 2,000 of which are in a portion of the reach rated highest priority for protection in both the Nisqually Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plans. The northerly 1,500 feet run along the BNSF railroad grade. The property is across the river from land owned by the Nisqually Indian Tribe, and it's likely it will be transferred to the Tribe (the parcel is on the Pierce County side of the river but technically in Thurston County, due to movement of the river).

Closed on 4.7 acres on Brighton Creek in partnership with the North Cascades Buddhist Priory. The property is on the downstream side of Hart's Lake Road. The Priory owns the property upstream of the road. The hope is to remove a big culvert under the road that is blocks salmon migration, which would open up four miles of good salmon habitat upstream.

Personnel change: Addie Schlussel, currently AmeriCorps Volunteer Coordinator, will join the Land Trust staff as our Stewardship Assistant in July, when her AmeriCorps term ends. Addie is the 3rd AmeriCorps volunteer who's gone on to a staff position with the Land Trust.

NLT also has scheduled nature walks June through October – sign up on website. Kayak trip sponsored by Kayak Nisqually tonight with sunset bioluminescence. Upper watershed Ffoat trips coming up in July – 28 and 29. NLT's Annual Meeting is on September 16.

Nisqually River Education Project – Sheila Wilson
NREP finished field trips yesterday:

- Eye on Nature at the Refuge – 9 dates (of 14 total in the program) with 436 students.
- Nearshore with National Fish & Oyster, NRNC and Pacific Shellfish Institute – 578 students, all 7th and 8th graders out from Salish Middle School, and some from Cougar Mountain
- NLT Invasives Removal – 156 students, Brandon ran singlehandedly.

Watershed Festival poster contest closes on Tuesday – for 1st-6th grades. Nisqually Stream Stewards is proceeding, 15 people registered including AmeriCorps crew from the Tribe. NREP also has a deal with Kayak Nisqually for a half day trip on 7/13 and full day on 6/14, at discounted rates. Summer Institute For Teachers is coming up June 25-27. 38 teachers registered. The theme is climate change and sea level rise and urban flooding. Brandon's last day is July 15, and the NREP AmeriCorps position is open for next year.

Nisqually River Foundation – Justin Hall
Justin was at AgForestry last meeting in Colville. Saw differences between federal, state, and private (Hancock) forests, plywood factory, co-generation plant that burns bark. He has been finishing up National Estuary Program Ecosystem Services Grant with partners – reporting on 2 years of work.

Community Forest – Justin Hall
The Community Forest's first annual public meeting was this Tuesday – 17 people attended. Talked about history, purchases, plans for property, upcoming thinning harvest (removing 20% of trees for forest health and greater diversity). Will try to put together a field tour. Positive meeting, had a lot of support from the folks the room. Still wrestling with public access – next to closed NLT lands bought for endangered species protection.

Justin attended Northwest Community Forest Coalition in Vancouver yesterday. There is a proposal from DNR to build a list of all the community forest projects in the state by Sept. 30. Will be circulating a survey about that soon, trying to capture the breadth of projects at any stage of activity. The goal is to take this to the Legislature for support.

3. Nisqually Salmon Recovery Habitat Action Plan Update
Chris Ellings, Nisqually Indian Tribe
Chris, Ashley, and Sayre Hodgson in NIT's salmon recovery program have been working on updating our ranking strategy for prioritizing salmon habitat and restoration projects. They come through the Tribe as Lead Entity, and through the Salmon Enhancement work group,

which develops the list for annual funding that comes to NRC for approval. This led to rethinking the Habitat Action Plan. There is still a lot of work to be done, ultimately leading to an updated habitat chapter that will combine with Nisqually Stock Management Plan and the Chinook recovery plan update. Chris would like the approval of the NRC to use this new strategy for this year's SRFB project list, and will bring us updated goals and other projects as they arrive.

Salmon Recovery Background:
Nisqually's Chinook Recovery Plan was released in 2001, before the federally-approved Puget Sound recovery plan. This plan has guided actions for 15 years, spelling out high priority projects, largely based on ecosystem diagnostic and treatment (EDT) model to identify small individual reaches for protection and restoration. The listing of steelhead in 2007 affected planning significantly because of small but distinct differences in primary core habitats from Chinook. The Nisqually Steelhead Recovery Plan was finalized in 2014, and is still in draft form so we can keep adding to it. The regional Puget Sound plan is still in development (NOAA has been sued over it).

Chris's goal is to better synchronize these two plans, better incorporating EDT and broader watershed recovery work along with adaptive management strategies at a big, ecosystem scale. Some of our work has been "bandaids" like engineered log jams (ELJs) where necessary, but need to think now about long-term, self-sustaining watershed ecosystem that can recover itself. We also want to capture actions and implementation monitoring metrics that are simple to track and report to state, federal, and other funders/stakeholders who want to know in simple terms when we are done and how much progress has been made towards recovery.

Successes and Looking Forward:
One big success is protecting mainstem habitat: this aligns with our approach of protecting watershed processes so the system can maintain itself with minimal help. "Bandaid" examples are Ohop Creek and Mashel. The Ohop is now on a course from degredation to restoration, but much more work remains to be done. The Mashel was highly impacted by logging up to the stream banks and splash dams that tore up the substrate and spawning gravels. We needed to create ELJs to create deep pools for salmon, with the initial intent being to create habitat complexity but then have them help recruit new wood so they can be self-sustaining. However, because the system is still being degraded by commercial forestry, large wood isn't coming downstream, and the ELJs aren't recruiting enough on their own and still need to be maintained. The Community Forest initiative is part of restoring this ecosystem function by purchasing industrial timberland in the upper basin and managing for larger, older forests that take up less water and support higher summer flows in the Mashel. Especially important as climate change advances and the Mashel is increasingly dependent on rain, vs. snow, in the mountains.

Delta restoration has also been a landmark success, restoring almost 1000 acres of estuary, which is vitally important for salmon recovery. Chris toured recently with Puyallup, which is looking at restoration projects. New research shows how vegetation is responding: salt marsh habitat is coming in where there's sufficient elevation, while some mudflats remain because

areas have subsided and compacted from 100 years of diking and dairy cow use. Sediment recruitment to restore delta elevation is being truncated by Alder Reservoir, where over 28 meters has accumulated in parts of the lake since 1945. In the long term, sediment delivery will need some creative solutions. Sea level rise is also a major concern, threatening the newly restored delta. Modifying I-5 to allow the estuary to expand upstream as sea level rises, as well as sediment delivery, are important next challenges.

New Approach: Habitat Initiatives
Chris's team is shifting to thinking in terms of initiatives, with projects within them (initiatives being larger scale, more ecosystem focused, can encompass numerous projects). He presented the draft Habitat Initiative Table, available from staff, which as been framed in terms of Viable Salmon Population Parameters (VSP). VSP is guidance developed by salmon experts on what healthy salmon populations look like – abundant, spatially diverse, genetically diverse, productive. The values are driven by modeling work, the best available science to look at projected impact of each of these initiatives on the two salmon species.

Each initiative has implementation metrics, which they hope to keep in simple terms: what percentage of natural level has been recovered (of habitat acreage, shoreline miles, etc)? It's difficult to develop metrics for mainstem sediment processes because the background natural sediment budget is unknown and would need extensive study – same with wood budget and flow patterns. TPU's Nisqually Hydroproject does a good job of cutting the peak off of high flow events, which can be good for property owners, but not good for salmon habitat, because it limits high flows (at least to the bank) which naturally would come every 1.5 years or so and deliver sediment.

Highest priority initiatives are very large, and would be congressional or legislative requests rather than local-scale salmon recovery funding streams. Mainstem projects are in the highest priority tier. Still working to establish "what is enough", and need to catalogue existing impairments along the shoreline, what is restorable/recoverable, and what we can live with under a cost-benefit analysis of highest impact.

Second tier is the starting point for our normal salmon recovery funded projects (items aren't ranked within tiers). includes the Eatonville Stormwater Comprehensive Plan (not through salmon recovery funding), and Mashel projects. We need a goal that features how many functioning log jams need to be in the Mashel at all times. None of these issues are new. The initiatives put them into a larger, more holistic context and incorporate new studies and learning over time (for example, about the need for ongoing ELJ maintenance).

Third tier includes barrier removal, South Sound Nearshore, Ohop Recovery, and Muck Creek (steelhead habitat that wasn't addressed under former Chinook Recovery Plan).

Fourth tier includes tributary areas. The metrics are framed in terms of forested uplands and shoreline miles protected, which could mean either buying properties or conservation easements. Envision it as owning core properties along mainstream and Mashel, and then easements in the broader tributary community to compensate landowners for better stewarding their properties. Chris noted that this initiative process will come with a whole

new suite of assessments and studies needed to develop more specific goals (such as a riparian easement strategy) that includes NLT, Conservation Districts and other stakeholders.

The goal is to track every metric through a pie chart, so they can show each year how much progress has been made towards the goal. All of these metrics are meant to have a desired effect on the salmon populations. When that chart is full, according to the best available science, it will have "X" effect on the target populations. Metrics are about changes in the habitat/landscape, not about salmon population. The science supports the metrics as things that will impact salmon population, but salmon population is not the measured outcome (lots of noise, very hard to do that).

Chris presented a draft of a scoring matrix to score projects according to these new criteria, and requested the NRC's approval to use this method. The Salmon Enhancement Work Group has reviewed and done a draft ranking to test it out. The scoring matrix has two parts that are generated by formula and one that is more subjective, important in leveraging the strength of the Nisqually effort, which is that we have good relationships and communication. Need to have the ability to be subjective and tweak scores to capture more nuance, move faster on short-term sales so we don't lose opportunities. The formulaic parts are points assigned based on which tier the project is in, and how much it will move the pie chart needle on the initiative metrics. Points are based on the percent change on the highest scoring metric. Assessments or design-only are also eligible projects, with more points for designs that go for maximum benefit. The difference between this system and the older system is it weights things by magnitude of change to the habitat. Protected status can overlap with restoration (something can be protected and still need to be restored.)

Questions and Comments:

- Many of these are long-term projects. Funders don't necessarily love to hear that it will be another 80 years before the goal is met, but we have to be frank about that. Chris agreed that we do have to be frank that restoration requires time and maintenance. Every watershed in Puget Sound has impacts from invasive species or hydrofacilities or a historic forest road system, they aren't remote enough to have no development impacts. That means you can't just do one thing and walk away – to have salmon and people living together, we have to invest in them in. We can get to the endpoint of fulfilling these goals, and then we'll be in a new phase of stewardship and monitoring to ensure long-term success.
- Fred commented on the historical loss of habitat and fish during his time in the area, since the 1960s. The barriers and challenges that folks have worked through to get to this point were significant. This matrix is an impressive effort to put back what's ben destroyed, and it will take a long time as well as big funding, hard work, and education to correct these things.
- Are other watersheds doing comparable plans? Chris said that most lead entities are updating their recovery plans. David stated that at the state level, the only place doing comparable work is the Lower Columbia.

Fred moved to accept the matrix. Molly seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

4. **AmeriCorps Year with NREP**
   Brandon Bywater, Nisqually River Foundation
   Brandon recapped his year of service as NREP's Washington Service Corps AmeriCorps member, which ends next month. He has a B.A. in Environmental Studies and Geology from Northeastern Illinois University and moved here from Chicago last July for this position. Brandon visited classes and helped with field trips year round, as well as revamping all of the NREP's in-class presentations for future use. He spent September going to classes and preparing students for Water Quality Monitoring, testing for 8 parameters of water quality on October 15 – 48 classes at 37 sites. In November, he visited classes again and prepared for native tree and shrub planting at the Ohop restoration site. He collected clippings of native plants each week for students to identify plants using a dichotomous key and taught about native, non-native, and invasive plants, and riparian zones (250 feet on either side of the river). Students planted about 1,800 plants over 2 weeks. At each step, Brandon collected survey data from students (over 2,000), which he entered in December.
   - Water quality – surveyed 219 students, saw 751 marks of improvement on 8 questions (got the same question wrong the first time and right the second time), with 42.87% improvement.
   - Tree planting – 532 students, 902 marks of improvement, 24.22% improvement.

   In January, Brandon did in-class presentations and field trips for salmon tossing. This was the only thing Brandon knew about the program before he took the job, and he was looking forward to it the whole time. They tossed 20,000 pounds of salmon, marine derived nutrients. In February there was the second round of water quality monitoring, to compare fall versus winter data. In March, he helped classes prepare for Student GREEN Congress at The Evergreen State College. They share their data with a panel of their peers, grades 4-8 in the Nisqually. Over 500 students this year, highest ever. After they present their data, they go to workshops and learn from professionals.

   From April on, Brandon has been doing multiple field trips, including leading Invasives Removal trips with 8 classes who came out to pull scots broom, blackberry, and English Ivy at several NLT sites. Each class tried to beat the last class's pile – it was during standardized testing, so it was a great way for students to burn off energy. He also participated in 9 Eye On Nature field trips at the Refuge, a capstone for kids that did the water quality-tree planting-salmon tossing. EON includes ethnobotany (teaching about the relationship between humans and plants), and NatureMapping, documenting species of animals (birds, reptiles, mammals). Finally, in Nearshore field trips, he led a watershed stormwater modeling activity. Students also visit a shellfish farm and do a benthics survey, crab survey, estuary in a jar.

   The NRC wished Brandon well on his next steps. Brandon commented that it's been refreshing to see how the people involved in the Nisqually deal constructively with the same kinds of problems that tend to fester in Chicago and elsewhere.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:57.