



Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council Annual Planning Retreat
July 20, 2018
Wa He Lut Indian School
Information: 360.438.8715

Attendees:

Council Members:

Dan Calvert – Puget Sound Partnership
Molly Carmody – City of Yelm
Matt Curtis – WDFW

Amber Martens - JBLM
Kevin Skerl – Mount Rainier National Park
David Troutt, chair – Nisqually Indian Tribe

Citizens Advisory Committee Members:

Ben Dennis
Phyllis Farrell
Howard Glastetter
Ed Kenney
Fred Michelson

Karelina Resnick
Marjorie Smith
Robert Smith
Lois Ward

Guests:

Roger Andrascik – NLT/NSS
Daniel Hull – NRNC
Martin McCallum – Nisqually Land Trust

John Montrose – Wa He Lut Indian School
Shannon Shula – Thurston County
Ashley Von Essen – Nisqually Indian Tribe

Staff:

Justin Hall – NRF
Joe Kane – NLT
Amber Left Hand Bull - NRF

Emily McCartan – NRF
Sheila Wilson – NRF

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

David called the meeting to order at 9:14am. John Montrose welcomed the NRC to Wa He Lut on behalf of the school, acknowledging that the school community recognizes the Nisqually as a sacred life source and is pleased to support the NRC's work. The minutes were approved, as was the agenda for the day.

2. Committee Reports and Updates

Advisory Committee Reports

Citizens Advisory Committee – Phyllis Farrell

The CAC met on July 10 and discussed updates on a number of issues including salmon recovery and plastics.

Chair Report – David Troutt

I-5 study is gaining some momentum, which will require a lot of study and analysis. WSDOT has organized an advisory committee looking at section from Mounts Road to Tumwater as one component of the corridor from Marysville to Tumwater. Because of the estuary, our section offers a unique potential environmental outcome that stands out from all other

projects in the region. NIT and WSDOT are funding hydrologic studies of the I-5 crossing and the high risk that the river will someday take out the freeway.

Allied Program Reports

Nisqually Land Trust – Joe Kane

NLT had a board meeting and site visit at the Community Forest yesterday. The board voted to support the Washington Association of Land Trusts in advocating for I-1631 (carbon emissions fee ballot measure) and may vote to endorse it as well. I-1631 would designate \$30 million/year to fund large scale forestry acquisition.

Nisqually River Education Project – Sheila Wilson

Nisqually Stream Stewards starts in two weeks, and there are still a few spots available. Summer Institute for Teachers was very successful with 42 teachers learning from local organizations about the effects of sea level rise. The Education Project received a NOAA BWET grant for \$60,000 to support our work with partners and professional development for teachers.

Nisqually River Foundation – Justin Hall

The Foundation received a \$79,000 WaterSMART grant from the Bureau of Reclamation for watershed planning. The NRF will be hiring a new AmeriCorps volunteer to support the education project and is also exploring hiring Brandon as full-time staff.

Community Forest – Justin Hall

First harvest (ecological thinnings) is planned to begin next month.

3. Salmon Recovery Program – Ashley Von Essen, Nisqually Indian Tribe

Presentation link: <https://www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/2018-srfb-psar-project-ranked-list>

Ashley presented the 2018 Habitat Project Ranked List (Chris described the new ranking system used for this round at last month's NRC meeting).

Project 1 – Middle Reach Protection and Restoration

- Amount Requested: \$290,710
- Acquisition/restoration of 60 acres along the mainstem at RM 33
- Project protects an additional .5% of mainstem flood zone
- NLT contributing 53% match

Project 2 – Lower Ohop Protection and Stewardship

- Continuing restoration from Phases I-III.
- Amount Requested: \$469,844
- Acquisition of 90 acres for future restoration opportunity
- Increases the amount of protected floodplains by 12.7%

Project 3 – Nisqually River Wilcox Reach Restoration Design

- Sponsor: South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group
- Amount requested: \$510,000
- Continuation of funding awarded in 2014

- Removal of up to 2,730ft of levees/berms, re-engage up to 100 acres of forested floodplain, side channels, wetlands
- Losing momentum now could greatly affect project success

Project 4 – McKenna Reach Protection – 65 acres along mainstem

- Amount Requested: \$237,362 (would partially fund project)
- Acquisition of 6.4 undeveloped acres along the northern shoreline of the Nisqually mainstem
- This project would protect 4 of 15 parcels that are at risk for future development near the town of McKenna

Project 6 – Lackamas Flats Protection and Restoration

- Amount Requested: \$505,428 (alternate)
- Acquisition of 49.5 acres along Lackamas Creek
- Planting of this site, along with enhancement of 185-acre Lackamas Creek Protected Area
- Might be a project that addresses water quantity for the Water Planning Group’s work

Project 7 – Upper Ohop Phase 2 – Protection and Restoration.

- Amount Requested: \$184,162 (alternate)
- Acquisition of 25.3 acres in the Upper Ohop Creek Valley, including .4 miles of Ohop Creek, adjacent to NW Trek
- 23 acre planting planned for this parcel, with additional plantings on the downstream NLT site

Project 8 – Middle Ohop Protection Phase II

- Amount Requested: \$219,138 (alternate)
- Conservation easement on 35 acres along 2,000 feet of middle Ohop Creek
- Project will enhance a 6-acre riparian planting done by NIT in 2005, along with planting an additional 3 acres

The project list was unanimously approved. The Tribe’s GIS department is working on analysis to determine how much of the mainstem shoreline is protected. These projects should bring it to approximately 76-77%.

4. Nisqually Watershed Stewardship Plan Status Report – Emily McCartan

Presentation Link: <https://www.slideshare.net/Nisqually/nisqually-watershed-stewardship-plan-status-report-2018-draft-presentation> Please see the slide deck for details on the report; comments are recorded for the minutes. Contact Emily for a copy of the draft report. To vote on top priorities within the NWSP goals and indicators, please use the survey here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScRf3iCNW89MoxI4WIggUKo1FcELFRbbM305FPV2fcHAf8ttw/viewform?usp=sf_link

Background

The Nisqually River Watershed Management Plan was adopted in 1987, with the formation of the Nisqually River Council as the implementing body. The plan was updated most

recently in 2011 as the Nisqually Watershed Stewardship Plan (NWSP), which laid out 12 central goals for watershed-wide sustainability on environmental, social, and economic issues. The NWSP identified indicators for each goal, but did not establish a baseline or concrete metrics. At the NRC's request, Emily has worked with a small task force to draft this status report to give current baselines and note gaps in our knowledge and analysis. We are now seeking comments and guidance from NRC members and community stakeholders about where to pursue further study, develop or recruit additional expertise, and ultimately identify priority actions for the next 7 years.

NWSP Status Report - Environmental

I.1 Prairie Ecosystems

Comments:

- Bald Hills prairie/oak habitat around Fossil Rock has endangered butterflies, horned larks, Taylor's Checkerspot (not in last 5 years).
- Thurston County is soon likely to submit draft HCP for pocket gophers to USFWS. There will be a review process after that.

II.1 Harvestable amounts of culturally important species

Comments:

- There is much less access for recreational fishing and hunting since the 1980s from McKenna up to La Grande, with two bridges gone and landowners (Weyerhaeuser, Pack Forest, Tribe, NLT) that do not allow public access to properties on either side of the river. Destroyed bridges were main access routes for Clearwood/Thurston residents to get to Eatonville and Pierce County sites.
- Request for a chart/graph of salmon harvest data.

II.2 Invasive species

Comments:

- Nisqually Cooperative Weed Management Area meets annually, including a couple of months ago. MOU of multiple local organizations.
- A more up-to-date knotweed map is available.

II.4. Recovery plans for ESA

Comments:

- Water howellia has been proposed for delisting.
- Pileated woodpeckers should be included on the listed species.

III.1 Forests are harvested in a sustainable manner

Comments:

- Suggest substituting stand ages for harvest rotations (more flexible for ecological harvest practices).
- Need to more clearly define "sustainable harvest" – here, we mean sustainability in ecological terms, not economic. Includes attributes beyond growth of trees.

III.2 Water usage protects in-stream flows, groundwater recharge areas, and surface filtration systems

Comments:

- Interest in more information about projected impacts of climate change and population growth.
- More information about watershed/water use planning would be helpful.

III.3 Sustainable agriculture

Comments:

- Thurston and Pierce Counties and Conservation Districts have lists of sustainable farms. Several anecdotal mentions of farms known to community members.
- Thurston County HCP should be available by around August 1.

III.4 Mineral extraction

Comments:

- CAC and community members interested in more information about mineral site reclamation. Interest in pushing for greater regulation and attention on the reclamation process. The Olympia train station is a good example of reclamation. Mines are required to have a reclamation plan and a reclamation bond or account to get a permit.
- Eatonville mining expansions are impacting the town.

III.5 Animal densities - recommend striking and rolling it into sustainable agriculture.

Comments:

- Anecdotal report that eastern Pierce County may have the highest per capita number of horses in the world?

IV.1 Students engaged in actively exploring the watershed.

Comments:

- Update number of NREP students served – probably closer to 2,000 per year. Shortage of bus drivers for field trips is a particular challenge.

IV.2 Local landowners and community members are active stewards of their lands and watersheds

Comments:

- Functioning Conservation District organizations are key to success in this area.
- Interest in seeing programs and resources for homeowners, as well as landowners.
- Opportunities to coordinate with municipalities and their public works departments?

IV.3 Watershed-based education programs are present in schools

Comments:

- Are there other programs in schools besides NREP? Many other organizations work with schools and are listed in IV.1, but NREP is the main specifically “watershed-based” program described in this indicator.

IV.4 Orgs and businesses provide access to educational programs and resources

Comments:

- Include NLT nature walk series; Wilderness Awareness School (check name), Trout Unlimited and Ducks Unlimited; local environmental advocacy and education groups.

NWSP Status Report - Social

V.1 Locally grown and produced foods are available and affordable

Comments:

- Does Yelm Community Services food bank offer local produce? Eatonville?

VI.1 Individual communities are linked by a network of multi-use trails

Comments:

- Add Nisqually River Water Trail to the list here as well as covering elsewhere.
- Include information about other trail users (horseback riders, whitewater rafters, etc.)
- A large network of trails and backcountry hiking in Weyerhaeuser's Vail property is off-limits without an expensive and hard-to-get permit (covered elsewhere in report).

VI.3 The public is aware of, and uses, regional recreational opportunities

Comments:

- Cross-reference here with opportunities in other sections (Scenic Byway, etc)
- Statewide Facebook group for recreation that may include watershed-level opportunities.
- The NRC used to have an active subcommittee addressing public access and recreation/trail options. Trout Unlimited and Weyerhaeuser were members, but have been less engaged in recent years.

VII.1 Farmers markets, co-ops, and alternative economies exist throughout the watershed.

Comments:

- Add more information about NIT Shellfish Farm and Community Garden here.
- Could include school garden programs here (or under Local Food/Education goals).

VII.2 Natural and built heritage facilities are protected

Comments:

- Add Medicine Creek Treaty National Monument designation

VIII.1 Transportation infrastructure supports public transportation, rider sharing, and alternative fuel vehicles.

Comments:

- Lack of public transportation in south Pierce County. There was briefly a bus line to Rainier, but it was cancelled due to low ridership.
- Mount Rainier National Park is installing electric vehicle charging stations at Paradise and Longmire. There is also a station in Yelm.

NWSP Status Report- Economic

IX.1 An increase in sustainable manufacturing within the watershed

Comments:

- Gun factory (Olympic Arms) in lower valley.

IX.3 Increased investment in natural capital by small and large business owners.

Comments:

- Could include Tacoma Public Utilities and electricity generation here as well as under IX.4.
- Suggested new indicator: address workforce/skill development for local industries facing difficulty finding new workers (timber, trucking, others), and incorporating sustainability.

IX.4 Developed areas of the watershed support ecosystem services.

Comments:

- Questions about whether there have been watershed efforts to implement transfer or purchase of development rights with market driven tools.

X.1 An abundance of sustainable recreation opportunities exist within the watershed.

Comments:

- Capacity to develop and maintain trails is a challenge for expanding recreation access.
- Transportation to recreational destinations like Mount Rainier – tour buses do pay an entrance fee, and the NPS is working on how many buses to allow in per day/other traffic and parking mitigation strategies.
- Add NW Trek, Mt. Tahoma Trails, bicycle and horseback riding to list if economic information can be found.

X.3 Scenic vistas and viewpoints are protected.

Comments:

- Corridor Management Plan has just completed its next phase, which will make Mt. Rainier Scenic Byway that much closer to completion.
- Add overlook on Meridian, north of Eatonville to list of existing viewpoints.
- Grant Jones developed a pilot watershed project which is currently with the NIT GIS department.

X.4. Non-traditional experiential tourism is supported.

Comments:

- Add: Starry Hill Observatory; scout camps; ATV trails
- Is there much cannabis tourism happening in the watershed?

XI.1 Opportunities to add value to products to maximize economic return for sustainable natural resource industries.

Comments:

- This could benefit rural communities. Lack of skilled workforce is also an issue.
- Believe only one logger in the region can handle larger logs locally.

XI.3 Infrastructure exists with which to process products locally.

Comments:

- Eatonville: log stripping mill; marijuana processing plant?
- Yelm: Harding Greens buys from brushpickers in Yelm, particularly single stalk horsetails.
- Look further into a “Protect the brew-shed” initiative?

Additional Comments:

It was noted that as the NRC identifies new priorities, we want to continue to assess whether new items will pull focus from the core missions that we continue to do well. Education is particularly important to many present, as the foundation for teaching kids, adults, and businesses to be engaged and to value the watershed. Agencies may be more appropriate “leads” on other actions identified as priorities. Education will continue to be one of the top missions for the Nisqually River Foundation. Thinking holistically about sustainability is also important. If we don’t have the glacier, then we won’t have the river, and without the river we won’t have salmon. A logging industry can’t exist without trees.

Next Steps:

Emily will reach out to members who aren’t present today, start working on incorporating comments into the draft report, and will brief at the next NRC. One step for new priorities may be bringing in expertise from outside the NRC’s usual sphere to speak at a meeting and provide some background and consultation on where to start. Goal is to have the final report to approve by September.

5. For the Good of the Order

Don Johnstone, who wrote Road to Mt. Rainier and presented to NRC awhile back. July 29th in Mineral at Presbyterian Church. Mill Pond Park at Van Eaton Park on August 2nd. Both are at 6:30pm.

Thanks to Lance and John at Wa He Lut Indian School for their work in hosting and setting up this retreat!

*Next meeting: Friday, August 17, 2018
Mount Rainier National Park*