



Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council Meeting
January 17, 2020
BFJNNWR
Information: 360.438.8715

Attendees:

NRC Members:

Dan Calvert – Puget Sound Partnership
Amy Cruver – Pierce County
Gary Edwards – Thurston County
Terry Kaminski – City of Yelm
Amber Martens – JBLM

Glynnis Nakai – BFJNNWR
Andrew Reed – DNR
René Skaggs – Pierce Conservation District
Kelly Still – WDFW
David Troutt – Nisqually Indian Tribe

CAC Members:

Phyllis Farrell
Howard Glastetter
Ed Kenney
Fred Michelson

Marjorie Smith
Robert Smith
Lois Ward

Guests:

Chantay Anderson – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Roger Andrascik – NLT/NSS
Beth Auerbach – RCO
Jeremy Badoldman – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Brad Beach – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Warren Bergh – NLT/NSS
Janell Blacketer – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Michelle Brigham – Preserve the Commons
Adam Cole – RCO

Janine Gates – Little Hollywood Media
Lloyd Fetterly – NLT/NSS
Cathy Hamilton Wissmer – JBLM
Paula Holroyde – League of Women Voters
Larry Leveen – Forever Greenway
Kurt Roblek – BFJNNWR
Mikayla Sison-Smith – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Ashley Von Essen – Nisqually Indian Tribe

Staff:

Brandon Bywater – NRF
Justin Hall – NRF
Joe Kane – Nisqually Land Trust

Emily McCartan – NRF
Maya Nabipoor – NRF
Sheila Wilson – NRF

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

David called the meeting to order at 9:07am. This is the 373rd meeting of the NRC, by David's reckoning. Minutes from the December meeting were approved, as was the agenda for the meeting.

2. Committee Reports and Updates

Advisory Committee Reports:

Citizens Advisory Committee – Phyllis Farrell

The CAC met on Tuesday, January 14 and discussed salmon runs, upcoming PSE grant presentation, and water bills before the Legislature. Several CAC members attended WSDOT's open houses on the upcoming I-5 corridor study. Members were disappointed that

the scenarios did not include the option of raising I-5 across the Nisqually Valley and had limited assessment of environmental factors. Written comments are due by January 30. The CAC also requested a letter from the NRC to the Department of Ecology on the general statewide permit renewal for biosolids, given the concerns with their application and oversight locally.

Chair Report – David Troutt

The Nisqually Indian Tribe has drafted a letter responding to Ecology’s public comment period on the question of whether biosolids should be handled under a general permit (as they are now) or through individual permits. The notice for public comment came over the holidays with a short deadline, and the Tribe requested and ultimately received an extension to January 24. The NRC and the public also have the opportunity to submit comments.

The Project Olga coalition met with the Governor’s Chief of Staff and natural resources advisors to discuss the goal of developing an annual legislative agenda to enable real progress on salmon and orca recovery. David has suggested that the next biennial budget include pilots of full funding for watershed plan implementation in several watersheds in eastern and western Washington, as an alternative to the current competitive grant funding model, which has not been sufficient. Long-term policy conversations also include the goal that all state capital projects, including I-5 and other transportation projects, should improve the environmental baseline.

Staff Report – Emily McCartan

The NRC approved sending a letter to Ecology on the general permit proposal for biosolids. Members noted that regardless of Ecology’s decision on permit structure, the NRC should stay involved in the update process as a key part of this year’s agenda for water quality. The NRC also approved sending a comment letter to the Department of Transportation on the I-5 study. The current draft report focuses on traffic. DOT is awaiting the results of research from the Nisqually Tribe and USGS to develop scenarios about environmental impacts on the delta. It is important that any recommendations or report at this stage are not considered as “final” before the environmental studies are completed. The legislation funding the study was clear that planning for the Nisqually Bridges and impacts on salmon habitat should be part of the final report and recommendations. It is not clear how changes to I-5 in the Nisqually Valley might impact the Thurston County subarea plan and how DOT plans to address it. Emily will circulate draft letters for review and comment next week.

Emily is continuing to work on streamflow restoration and watershed planning more broadly, expecting to bring strategic plan options to the NRC this year. The NRF also received a grant from Puget Sound Energy to support community outreach and environmental work. PSE will present to the NRC on topics of interest later this year.

Allied Program Reports:

Nisqually Land Trust – Joe Kane

NLT had its best-ever annual appeal, raising nearly \$125,000. The annual auction is scheduled for March 14. There are numerous projects in the pipeline, including grant proposals for SRFB, PSAR, and Streamflow Restoration. NLT is working with the

Community Forest on developing new carbon credit projects and re-verifying the original project (required every six years – this will be one of the first projects to go through re-verification).

Nisqually River Education Project – Sheila Wilson

Under the state No Child Left Inside grant, NREP took students from Wa He Lut Indian School snowshoeing at Mount Rainier last week. Another trip is planned with the Nisqually Youth Center later in the month. It's a fun and rewarding outdoor experience for the youth who participate. Salmon tossing trips with Stream Stewards and school groups are continuing. Water Quality Monitoring Day is coming up on February 13 – volunteers needed. NREP is applying for an EPA Environmental Education Grant and a NOAA Environmental Literacy Grant, which is one of the few funding sources for climate education. Applications for Tribal charitable funds from around Puget Sound are also in process.

Nisqually River Foundation – Justin Hall

Thanks to those who donated to the NRF's annual appeal. The Nisqually Tribe's Charitable Fund supported the Foundation for \$5,000 this year. The NRF plans to submit three Streamflow Restoration grants, including two for the Community Forest. Local government stakeholders will meet this afternoon to discuss short and long-term funding for water planning in the Nisqually. One option being considered is to create interagency agreement to provide financial support to the Nisqually River Council, which would then create a work plan to address streamflow restoration and other water planning issues. The Council has discussed a pay-to-play model in the past, and members should discuss with their agencies whether they have the ability to contribute through an interlocal agreement. No details have been put forward and would be discussed with the NRC.

Nisqually Community Forest – Justin Hall

The Community Forest's board is preparing for their annual retreat. Hope to see opportunities to double the current size over the next year. The Nisqually Tribe is working toward finalizing their Clean Water Revolving Fund loan to purchase additional land for the Community Forest. Harvest concluded in November, including selling some root wads for salmon recovery projects.

Salmon Recovery – Ashley Von Essen

This year's Yil Me Hu newsletter is in process. The Tribe's planting crew is planting 12 acres at Powell Creek. Volunteer opportunities to help at a work party on MLK Day (Monday, January 20, 9:00-3:00). A 2020 plant maintenance schedule is in development with Nisqually Land Trust, including tube removals at Ohop planting sites. Tubes are expensive and can be difficult to reuse because of wear and tear, but are vital to plant survival by protecting them from pests for the first few years of growth.

3. 2020 State of the Sound Report

Dan Calvert, Puget Sound Partnership

The State of the Sound is a high level overview of Puget Sound recovery efforts. The mission of the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) is to accelerate the collective effort to recover and sustain Puget Sound, acting as a backbone organization to coordinate and support partner

organizations. The State of the Sound for 2020 includes a call to action from PSP Director Laura Blackmore: “On the surface, Puget Sound looks beautiful, but it’s in grave trouble.”

PSP’s action agenda has over 600 vetted, ranked projects for recovery, and seeks to provide accountability by documenting and measuring progress on Vital Signs. These are indicators of ecosystem health including water quality, human health, human quality of life, species and food web, habitat, water quantity. In the 1990s, PSP set recovery goals for 2020:

- 4 indicators are meeting 2020 targets
- 21 do not have targets established
- 27 are not meeting 2020 targets.

Indicator species are not doing well. PSP’s goal for SRKWs was 95 orcas by 2020, and there are currently 73, with only two calves surviving since 2015. Little sign of Chinook salmon recovery. Pacific herring are doing worse.

Indicators showing improvement include shoreline armoring (29% of Puget Sound coastline), with some removal happening with support at the local level through conservation districts and others. Forest loss is still occurring, but the rate has slowed. Partners are working to better integrate social science into recovery efforts. Studies of human well-being suggesting that 70% of residents say Puget Sound is important to their sense of place, which is a factor in support for conservation. The report highlights local success stories, including volunteers documenting fish passage barriers in Clallam County, Snohomish partnerships for floodplain restoration in agricultural areas, and a Tacoma school replacing playground asphalt with rain gardens and pervious surfaces. Orca Recovery Day began two years ago with local efforts focused on habitat restoration, and is growing with attention across the West Coast.

The biggest barrier to recovering is funding. The 2016-2018 Action Agenda had a 59% funding gap. The 2018-2022 Action Agenda has an 80% gap, with a \$1.3 billion need to implement the proposed near term actions critical for recovery. PSP is making a call to action to every level of government, NGOs, and the public to take a role in recovering Puget Sound, and to speak up by voting, talking to friends, and telling elected officials to prioritize recovery.

Discussion:

- Shoreline armoring is manmade barriers put up along waterways to protect developed property. WDFW issues hydraulic project permits for new shoreline construction, and counties regulate through Shoreline Master Plans. WDFW rules recently changed to no longer allow residential bulkheads without going through engineering report and permit. Replacement bulkheads now must demonstrate a need for replacement, and some jurisdictions are moving towards requiring serious risk to allow armoring. It armor is most damaging where it cuts off feeder bluffs for fish. Because there is so much existing, there is a misperception that it’s needed or desirable. Many homeowners want to be able to maintain and extend their bulkheads. Thurston and Pierce Conservation Districts have “shore-friendly” programs to help landowners assess sites, discuss alternatives, and identify grant funding for better approaches, and can be more successful in landowner outreach because they are not regulators. The NRC is interested in having a presentation on shoreline management.

- Why is OSU supporting PSP research instead of local Puget Sound universities? – The OSU study began with a fellow at the UW, who is now working at OSU and has continued the project. Funding for UW’s participation ended. State investment in research has been slow to come. WSU has worked with the Nisqually Tribe on education research at their shellfish farm.
- What is driving forage fish declines? – Shoreline armoring restricts their spawning habitat due to loss of eelgrass and kelp. Water quality is also a major factor. Not sure about impacts of industrial aquaculture but a future presentation could be arranged. WDFW has a recent forage fish report to share and DNR is studying eelgrass.
- What can PSP do to push aggressively for an education agenda? Nisqually has invested heavily in education for students and families about stewardship and their role in the watershed since 1992, and believe it pays off. With new residents moving into Puget Sound, there are many audiences to reach. PSP has found education and outreach to be the most difficult to fund. Members noted that education and outreach needs to be in place so the public understands the need for recovery funding. High-income urban areas in Puget Sound continue to grow, and funds do not flow down to recovery needs in rural areas like Nisqually and elsewhere. The Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council has discussed alternate funding structures. We should not be afraid to say that the PSP’s goal to restore Puget Sound by 2020 has failed – we need an alarm bell. The systems and species in crisis are highly interlinked, and the challenges are significant, so people need to realize how serious the situation is and support investment.

4. Recreational Assets of Statewide Significance Study

Adam Cole, Washington Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Analyst

The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO)’s mission is to create state recreation strategies and plans, conduct studies, serve as a repository of recreation information, and administer recreation grants. RCO also represents the state on hydroelectric dam licenses. \$55 million in RCO projects have been awarded in the Nisqually WRIA since 2010. Grant projects are available online by county and WRIA, mostly through salmon recovery.

This study was funded by the Legislature in 2018 to identify recreational assets of statewide significance, addressing population change and other factors. An advisory committee including local elected officials and NGOs contributed. The final report and mapping application are now available online:

Report: <https://rco.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/RecAssetStateSignificance.pdf>

Map: <https://wa-rco.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=c52857f9c4b0408c88e57c7fe4a6ec35>

Recreational Assets of Statewide Significance were defined in two categories:

- 1) Foundational – support most popular recreation, local to population centers
- 2) Exceptional – most iconic and popular by user group, “destination” sites, in need of protection, or support a group with unique opportunities

Outdoor recreation is a huge part of Washington State. Surveys of recreational habits covered 144 activities. Popular activities include walking, biking, hiking, park leisure, fishing, swimming, paddling, sports, motorboating/sailing, camping, snow and ice recreation. 16,000 facilities support these activities. The study conducted a spatial gap analysis to find out which communities had close access to various activities (ideally, 10 minutes to a walking

trail, 30 minute drive to “backcountry” trail or boat launch). Analysis included capacity and population density. The data on the map still needs vetting for accuracy by local community members. Recreation is an important income source for counties: high recreation spending per capita is directly correlated to the number of opportunities in that county.

Recommendations for next stages of study include:

- Maintain and improve study map applications to improve metrics, analysis, add demographic layers additional survey data.
- Sap regional and long-distance trails, including missing links and possible routes.
- Establish service level thresholds.
- Decide on Phase II development (funding from the Legislature expected next biennium) with input from policymakers using the tool.

Exceptional assets were identified by survey and listening sessions with recreational and stakeholder groups (NRC staff contributed). Respondents generally felt they had enough opportunity to recreate, but there were deficiencies in the quality of sites, including crowding, coordination, facilities, roads within public lands, and accessibility. Stakeholder reports identified assets and gaps by region. The main challenges are resources that aren’t keeping pace with demand, and less access to recreation for low income communities. Athletic fields in urbanizing areas can offer efficient use of space with lots of opportunities for recreation. There were also concerns about preserving access and facilitating coordination in the face of development for water recreation, shooters, backcountry hikers, others.

Washington will experience significant population changes in the next 20 years, with 1.5 million projected new residents and aging populations. This will create more competition for recreational assets, lands, and facilities. RCO hopes to maintain and expand the high satisfaction many people currently express in recreational opportunities. Notably, a large number of voices support expanding heritage, wildlife, environmental and historical interpretation alongside recreation, to help new and old Washingtonians understand our state’s resources.

Discussion:

- Will this study influence the RCO grant process? – The study is expected to be a useful tool for 24 grant programs in directing funding to areas of need.
- Did local communities provide input or verify? This seems to overestimate the number of swimming pools available to Nisqually residents, for example. – Hope this will be part of the next phase.
- A future step could be developing an application for public and/or tourism industry to use in sharing information about recreational opportunities.
- How is RCO involved in dam oversight? – RCO is the state point for addressing recreation opportunities (sometimes required as mitigation for hydrodams), as well as wildlife and fish issues.

5. Yelm Prairie Line Trail

Larry Leveen, ForeverGreen Trails

ForeverGreen Trails is a Pierce County nonprofit with sister organizations in Lewis and Thurston Counties. Larry last presented to the NRC in May 2019 about this project, which plans to connect Yelm and Roy with a multiuse trail using an abandoned BNR rail line (right-of-way currently owned by Yelm). The NRC sent a letter of support for grant applications. The trail plan is to use intact bridges over Centralia Canal and Nisqually River to develop 5 miles of shared-use path for biking, walking, equestrian users. Phase 1 is complete, Phase 2 would cross the river, and phase 3 would extend to Roy (stretch goal would extend to JBLM East Gate). It is consistent with local and regional planning for parks and transportation, and gives access to Thurston County trails to Pierce County users. Roy is a partner in the project, and hopes to use the eventual trail as the anchor for a future city park, as well as giving residents better access to transit in Yelm. The plan is coordinated with DOT's 510 Alternate Route project, and helps improve emergency preparedness in case of problems at the 507 bridge. The community is excited and interested, with partners including NLT, NRC, NIT, Backcountry Horsemen, Save the Roy Water Tower, and Pierce County Council.

Current status and next steps: The Puget Sound Regional Council funded a planning grant for \$45,000 for the Pierce County section of the trail. ForeverGreen has also received an in-kind planning grant from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. Contact Larry if you are interested in being included in NPS planning meetings. The City of Yelm plans to reapply for grant funding through RCO for the design and construction of the river crossing. Larry requested a letter of support from the NRC for this application, which members approved. Eventually, ForeverGreen hopes to see trail connections to Tacoma, Palouse-to-Cascades Trail, and Willapa Hills trails, drawing statewide tourism.

Discussion:

- Will the trail be wide enough to accommodate multiple users and emergency vehicles? – Yes, ideally it will be a 100-foot right-of-way with separate lanes for equestrian and bike/pedestrian users. Suggest exploring funding with first responder agencies for possible emergency access.
- What is the timeline for completion? – If RCO funds Yelm's grant this year, the funding would be available to start in 2021, with two years to complete the portion crossing the Nisqually River. Phase 3 would be available to start in 2022 with PSRC funding.
- The Nisqually Land Trust is working on salmon recovery acquisitions on either side of the Yelm trestle, which will support this project.

6. For the Good of the Order

- Volunteer opportunities for MLK Day of Service with Nisqually Land Trust (tree planting) and at Nisqually Reach Nature Center.
- Pierce Conservation District plant sale has recordbreaking pre-orders this year, with 800 plants ordered.
- Ed reported three coho salmon spotted near Powell Creek.
- Glynnis introduced Kurt Roblek, the new Refuge Deputy Manager. He has primary responsibility for day to day operations of the Refuge. Kurt has been in the USFWS for 18 years, previously at Humboldt Bay and San Diego Bay NWRs. The NRC welcomed him warmly to the Nisqually.