



**Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council Meeting
June 19, 2020
Online Meeting**

Attendees:

NRC Members:

Anne Baxter – Dept. of Ecology
Dan Calvert – Puget Sound Partnership
Amy Cruver – Pierce County
Terry Kaminski – City of Yelm
Darrin Masters – WDFW

Glynnis Nakai - BFJNNWR
Rene’ Skaggs – Pierce Conservation District
Kevin Skerl – Mount Rainier National Park
David Troutt, chair – Nisqually Indian Tribe

CAC Members:

Phyllis Farrell
Ed Kenney
Howard Glastetter

Paula Holroyde
Lois Ward

Guests:

Katie Anderson – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Roger Andrascik – NLT/NSS
Jeff Antonelis-Lapp
Brad Beach – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Warren Bergh – NLT/NSS
Sam Boutelle - MORA
Yanah Cook – Love Abounds
JW Foster – City of Yelm

Janine Gates
Emma Holm – MORA
Alena Reynolds – ECY
April Roe – Nisqually Reach Nature Center
Eric Rosane – Nisqually Valley News
Paulette Van Cleve
Ashley Von Essen – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Margaret Webster – MORA

Staff:

Justin Hall - NRF
Joe Kane - NLT
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 9:34. 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 last week. The group discussed local and national protests for Black Lives Matter and talked about the need for action and involvement, including understanding how priorities are set through budgets. Members also discussed stakeholder opposition to the Chehalis water retention facility proposal, a recent Thurston County hearing on an access

road proposal at the LDS Nisqually Camp, and the arrest of an individual connected with maple poaching in the Powell Creek/Peissner Road area. Howard shared an update on his complaint to FERC regarding TPU's handling of the February 6 flood. TPU has responded to FERC with the dam operation data for the period requested and FERC will now review.

Chair Report – David Troutt

The Nisqually Tribe opposed the proposed culvert and road at the LDS Nisqually Camp at before the Thurston County hearings examiner, concerned that the culvert is inadequate in the 100-year floodplain. The Tribe has offered to work with them to replace the culvert with a bridge. They have only recently applied for an HPA, which is in review with WDFW.

David continues to work with Project Olga coalition on shaping a legislative agenda for 2021-2023 biennium, with the goal of advancing environmental salmon recovery issues in spite of extremely challenging budgets in the age of COVID. One objective is to pursue a requirement that publicly funded capital projects must improve environmental baseline. Independent funding for restoration and recovery projects will be hard to grow this year.

Staff Report – Emily McCartan

The NRC's annual retreat is scheduled for next month on July 17. We anticipate that it will be held online and are encouraging attendance from all member agencies. Proposed agenda includes:

- Elections for NRC leadership (chair and vice chair)
- NRC Membership and Organizational Structure:
 - Following the watershed planning/streamflow restoration efforts of the last several years, it's been proposed that Olympia and Lacey join the River Council. Both cities have potential capacity to contribute financially to broad-based implementation efforts of our watershed plans pursuant to their water right agreements.
 - Sustainable funding for watershed planning and implementation has long been a challenge. Expanding NRC membership and proposing some level of financial contribution from member agencies to support this body is one way to accomplish that. We will share a draft version of this proposal at the retreat for discussion and input, with approval from the NRC needed before beginning discussions with member governments.
- Creating action committees on communications and other topics, if desired.
- Let Emily know other agenda items for the retreat or the coming year.

Allied Program Reports

Nisqually Land Trust – Joe Kane

NLT hopes to announce a new executive director by the end of next week. Several major transactions pending. Stewardship staff are working in the field and hoping to start volunteer work again when counties move into Phase III.

Nisqually River Education Project – Sheila Wilson

Maya Nabipoor will be staying for a second AmeriCorps term with the NRF for the 2020-2021 year. Summer Institute for Teachers is next week, blending online workshops with

breakout sessions and optional action projects that teachers can do at home, online, or with socially-distanced partner organizations. The theme is Action for Oceans, funded by NOAA B-WET and ClimeTime from Washington State OSPI. Having the sessions online has broadened our reach, so teachers from Ellensburg, Seattle, the Peninsula, and elsewhere will be participating. Dan Calvert is developing a session for the 2021 Salmon Recovery Conference discussing education and outreach, with NREP and NRC as a model for the state.

Sheila recognized Eatonville School District teacher Paulette Van Cleve, who is retiring after 32 years of teaching and many years of working with the NREP. She has led hundreds of students on water quality, tree planting, salmon tossing, Eye On Nature, and Student GREEN Congress trips and advocated for the NREP programs in Eatonville. Paulette noted that Student GREEN Congress was a highlight for her students and she really valued the partnerships that make it possible. The NRC thanked Paulette for her important work sharing these values with the next generation of stewards.

Nisqually River Foundation and Nisqually Community Forest – Justin Hall

The NRF is developing socially distanced and online plans for the Nisqually Watershed Festival and Nisqually Stream Stewards to enable people to learn about and be involved in the watershed even during the pandemic. NRF is exploring fee-based educational programs for adults and families based at Mount Rainier Institute, including forest bathing, mushroom tour, and botany classes. These would be possible to do during COVID with outdoor precautions, and would support MRI and NRF staff as well as bringing in new supporters.

The NRF is likely to take a 15% cut from current RCO funding due to COVID budget reductions. Impacts to grant funding are likely to be seen in a year or two, and the NRF will be looking for broad partners to help support. Julia Fregonara has been hired as education coordinator at least through the end of 2020, and hope to be able to keep that position funded.

NRF and Eye On Nature partners held an online fundraiser last week to support EON field trips at the Refuge. The program is supported by grants and an annual silent auction fundraiser. It was a huge success, raising over \$4,000, more than double previous fundraisers. Daniel Hull from the NRNC emceed and Jeff Antonelis-Lapp gave a virtual field trip tour of the Nisqually Watershed.

The NRF is beginning internal discussions about diversity, equity, and inclusion. The River Council was in some ways founded out of civil rights struggle, but we are acknowledging that we have work to do to support racial and environmental justice in our organizations and communities.

The Nisqually Community Forest is working on land transfer later this month, is exploring a carbon project combining Community Forest and Land Trust lands. NCF is also pursuing Forest Stewardship Council certification.

Salmon Recovery – Ashley Von Essen

Ashley presented an amendment request to transfer PSAR funding to protect 174 acres on the mainstem shoreline in the Wilcox Reach. #1 ranked project in 2016. Funding was moved out

of the project due to delays and uncertainty, but it is now able to move forward. NLT is proposing closing out 3 existing projects no longer in need of PSAR funding, and transferring that funding to this project. It is a large and complex project totaling over \$1.2 million, with other pending sources including Streamflow Restoration funds and 2020 PSAR grant round adjustments. Additional backup options are worth exploring, including Tribal mitigation funds or PSP Rapid Response funds, due to significant concerns about capital budget funding due to COVID. It was moved and seconded to approve the transfer. The transfer of funds was approved.

2020 SRFB and PSAR project list will be ranked by the Habitat Work Group next week and presented for approval at the July NRC meeting. The Tribe's planting crew has been working throughout the pandemic to complete tube removals and planting plans for next year.

3. Nisqually River Education Project Summary, 2019-2020

Maya Nabipoor, AmeriCorps member with Nisqually River Foundation

NREP programs by the numbers, prior to COVID-19:

- Water Quality Monitoring: 67 students, 19 teachers
- Salmon Toss – 168 students, 8 classes
- McLane Creek chum spawning – 266 students, 11 classes.
- Tree planting – 709 students, 139 volunteers (1696 volunteer hours).
- No Child Left Inside grant, outdoor experiences for tribal youth, with Nisqually Youth Center and Wa He Lut Indian School. Participate in school field trips as well as unique trips focused on recreation and not educational objectives – horseback riding, snowshoeing (one of Maya's favorite days of the year).
- Student GREEN Congress, Eye On Nature, and Nearshore field trips were cancelled this year due to the pandemic.

Maya selected 10 classes participating in multiple field trips at the beginning of the year, and surveyed students about their knowledge of salmon and environmental science. The original plan was to end the year with a final lesson reviewing and tying concepts together and then resurveying them. This couldn't happen because of COVID this year, but Maya was able to get responses with the help of some dedicated teachers. Of the students who did both surveys, the average improvement was 15.6% (average score increased from 10.2 to 13.2 out of 16). The average answer to "I vow to protect my watershed" on a scale of 1-5 was 4.3. Even in a very disrupted school year, it's reassuring to see that students did show improvement, and offers hope these lessons will stay with them and they can build on them.

Beyond the numbers, Maya's most meaningful experiences were individual relationships built with teachers and students. Students who sometimes struggle with focus and distraction in the classroom are usually the ones who show the most leadership and engagement on field trips. NREP provides experiences for students who might not be getting what they need in the classroom, serving many learning types. One of the most impactful experiences was talking to students about tribal fishing rights, and finding them open to listening respectfully and get a new perspective. Excited to return for next year to build on this year's experiences, and also get to do some of the regular programs that were cancelled this year.

Discussion:

The survey results bring home the importance of education in conservation work. These experiences help align kids' perspectives and understandings with the reality of what needs to happen to care for the environment, which is fundamental to sustainability.

Do students do repeat field trips? – Most classes do at least 2 field trips. Some only participate in one activity per year.

Sheila acknowledged Maya's volunteer service and for being part of the program.

4. Tahoma and Its People: A Natural History of Mount Rainier National Park

Jeff Antonelis-Lapp, author and emeritus faculty of The Evergreen State College

Jeff is the author of *Tahoma and Its People*, published this year by WSU Press. Tahoma is one of several names of native PNW people for the Mountain. There are several meanings ascribed to it. The title of the book shows respect for all the people over 9000 years who have had a relationship with the Mountain. Jeff also recognized the teaching and access he received from the Nisqually and Muckleshoot Tribes and National Park Service staff.

Two overarching themes of the book:

- People have been going to the mountain for over 9,000 years.
- The effects of climate change at Mount Rainier are far-reaching.

Tribal history at the mountain

White explorers in the mid-1800s included Lt. August Kautz (1857) and Hazard Stevens and Philemon Van Trump (1870, first recorded summiters). They were well-acquainted and traveled with tribal people guiding them around the mountain, but still wrote that native people had “superstitious fears and traditions” that prevented them from accessing the high country. In fact, oral histories and stories include many native traditions of young men climbing to the top of Mount Rainier. Allan Smith at WSU interviewed tribal elders in 1963 from Yakama, Nisqually, and Muckleshoot, including Billy Frank Jr.'s parents. Interviews showed that native people had gone to the high country for generations, seasonally harvesting mountain goats, bear grass, and huckleberries (extremely important part of diet). Smith also learned from tribal elders that native groups laid loose claim to Mount Rainier generally along ridge lines. Tribal groups accessed the mountain from the watersheds in which they lived: primarily Puyallup, Muckleshoot, Yakama, and Nisqually. Large population centers were at least 30 miles from the mountain on the west side, 80 miles on the Yakama side. Travel by horseback only became common in last 300 years, meaning people walked for days to reach the mountain to access resources that weren't found near lowland villages. Smith's work wasn't published until 2006 as *Tahoma: Ethnography of Mount Rainier National Park*. It has been used as the basis for archaeological research: over 100 sites identified within the park with thousands of years of use as camps, containing stone shards and tools including scrapers, blades, projectile points. One site in the Nisqually Watershed near Kautz Creek trail has over 7,000 years of use as a camp. Soil stratigraphy shows clear layers from different volcanic explosions back to Mount Mazama eruptions, very useful for dating artifacts. Most of camp sites occur between 4,000-6,000 feet: the transitional zone between lowland forest and alpine meadows, where beargrass and huckleberries thrive and

game animals come to forage. Archaeological record is constantly adding value to what we know about the mountain.

Climate change effects

In traveling Mount Rainier with researchers, climate change is everywhere, affecting butterflies, trout, amphibians, forests, and wildflowers. Bull trout have a very narrow band of suitable habitat relying on very cold water. Native wildflowers at Paradise are opening earlier and blooming for longer. They are evolved to be tightly timed relative to pollinators, and if they drift apart in time, it could be very damaging.

Mount Rainier has more glacial ice than any other peak in continental US, and more than all other Cascade peaks, but the glaciers are receding and disappearing. NPS geologists Scott Beason and Paul Kennard have documented the loss of 8 glaciers in their lifetime. Between 1896 and 2015, the mountain's glaciers lost 39% of surface area and 45% of volume. Nisqually Glacier has receded 2.5 miles since mid-1800s, over 1 mile in last 60 years. All glaciers are at their historic minimums. These changes are sudden in geologic time. There are significant effects on glacial rivers as a result, with much faster movement of loose material downstream from upper elevations. The Nisqually River aggraded about 4 inches per decade consistently through most of 20th century. Between 1996 and 2006, the rate increased ninefold, to 36 inches per decade. Aggradation creates more erosion and more extreme floods as the riverbeds fill up with material. The major 2006 flood wiped out Sunshine Point campground and road from Nisqually Entrance, causing \$20 million damage and taking over 6 months to repair. Glacial outburst floods, spontaneous debris flows of large amounts of rock material, are happening more frequently. Tahoma Creek is a hot spot for glacial outburst floods, with 30 million cubic yards of sediment in one event: 2 lines of dump trucks from Tahoma Creek to New York City. These events come in addition to the fact that Mount Rainier is an active volcano with existing geologic hazards unrelated to climate change. Volcanic activity has caused over 60 in last 10,000 years. They flow down river valleys, including the Osceola Mudflow (5,600 years ago, through White River) and the Electron mudflow – 500 years ago in Puyallup River valley, buried Orting). Mount Rainier has different magmatic properties than Mount Saint Helens, so will probably not have a similar eruption – but it does have different hazards.

Mount Rainier is like a melting ice cream cone. Climate change poses lots of questions for researchers: how many glaciers will we lose? What plants and animals will be most affected? What will future generations encounter? The good news: connection between Tahoma and its people is as strong as it's ever been. 2 million visitors per year in recent history. Residents in river valleys regularly practice lahar evacuation drills. Hundreds of volunteers work on the mountain every year. Innovative solutions like engineered log jams are helping to secure roads built in aggrading river valleys, which help slow down water, drop sediment, and provide habitat for fish. Setback levees also help protect infrastructure from volatile floods and creates offchannel habitat. The Sustainability in Prisons project trains incarcerated people to grow native plants which are planted to restore alpine and watershed meadows. Fishers, which were extirpated by trapping in the early 20th century, are being reintroduced to the Cascades from healthy Canadian populations. These restoration activities bring together communities across age groups and backgrounds and help adapt to the future.

Discussion:

How are wildlife populations being affected by climate change on the mountain? – Lots of effects. Spotted Owl is endangered, evidence that its prey is affected, being outcompeted by barred owls. Bull trout appears to be very susceptible to increase in water temperatures.

Knowing the long history of human interaction with the mountain, what is the future impact of current millions of visitors? – The trend recently has been for high visitation. Many efforts by the Park Service and partners to help educate people about stewardship, volunteer engagement, etc. Nationwide, NPS has a backlog of \$30 billion of deferred maintenance. As a community, we need to be educated, get involved, and help as volunteer and advocates. Need to continue to welcome people into the park and help them become stewards.

For the Good of the Order

PCD is highlighting award recipients on Facebook this year due to cancellation of the awards dinner.

Jim Wilcox retiring from the Leadership Council of the Puget Sound Partnership. He will still be involved with the Nisqually.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:58.

*Next meeting: Annual Retreat, July 17, 2020 via Zoom
Stay home and stay healthy!*