



Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council Meeting
January 21, 2022
Online Meeting

Attendees:

NRC Members:

Jesse Barham – City of Olympia
Gary Edwards - Thurston County
Commissioner

Glynnis Nakai - BFJNNWR
Rene Skaggs - Pierce Conservation District
David Troutt, Chair - Nisqually Indian Tribe

CAC Members:

Phyllis Farrell
Howard Glastetter
Paula Holroyde

Ed Kenney
Lois Ward

Guests

Roger Andrascik – NLT/NSS
Jeff Barney – Pierce County
Annette Bullchild - Nisqually Indian Tribe
Dan Calvert - JBLM Sentinel Landscape
Partnership
Lloyd Fetterly – Citizen
Kim Flotlin - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Terry Frederick - US Fish & Wildlife
Service

Dani Madrone – American Farmland Trust
Sarah Montero - JBLM
Julie Rector - City of Lacey
Etsuko Reistroffer - Stream Steward
Larry Stickney - Pierce County Council
Juliana Tadano - Puget Sound Partnership
Casey Vaughn - ECY
Ashley Von Essen – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Jeff Zahir - Citizen

Staff:

Jeanette Dorner – NLT
Julia Fregonara – NRF
Justin Hall – NRF
Tristan Olson - NRF

Joe Kane - NCF
Layne Perkins - NRF
Sheila Wilson - NRF

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

Phyllis Farrell, at David Troutt's request, called the meeting to order at 9:02am. Minutes were approved, as was the agenda for the day.

2. Committee Reports and Updates

Advisory Committee Reports:

CAC Report - Phyllis Farrell

The Citizens Advisory Committee met in January and is hoping to return to in person meetings as soon as possible. CAC members are interested in receiving legislative updates as well as updates on restoration projects. Regarding flood control, members would like to propose a standing committee involving Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU), Nisqually River Council (NRC), and County staff to discuss the issue of water levels at the Alder Lake reservoir. While TPU has recently been maintaining summer capacities no lower than 10 feet, there are no level requirements they must stay under during fall and winter. All three storms this season have been handled well with CAC members engaging the County to help mitigate flooding, but limit suggestions would be advantages to the flood valley and TPU. Phyllis Farrell moved to have this considered as an agenda item in February for discussion. As it stands, TPU does not view this as a high priority and it would involve time and money on their part. Currently, the reservoir is a foot from capacity and TPU is taking action to move it to four feet below capacity.

Chair Report – David Troutt

For the past two years, the tribes in Washington have been discussing riparian zone rehabilitation. The Governor has embraced this issue by saying he wants to restore riparian areas around salmon bearing streams using tree height to implement restoration regulations (what will the tree's height be in 100 - 150 years). The Lorraine Loomis Act is addressing site potential tree height through mapping exercises to find critical areas in need of protection and working with local watershed groups to offer land owners enrollment in incentive programs. If these programs are declined, the state of Washington would move to make them comply through a fine.

4,500 people signed up to discuss this bill with 80% testifying against making the fate of the bill uncertain. David spoke with Jim Wilcox about how to move the agriculture industry closer to the Lorraine Loomis Act, but there is a lot of fear and one of the reasons is because they were not at the table during its crafting. The chair does not want to bring the bill to a vote and it will likely not make it out of committee this session. However, it has likely changed the dynamics around the conversation as agriculture realizes it must now engage with environmental regulations as the timber industry did before them.

The I-5 project is gaining momentum daily and there will be a three to five billion dollar request for construction to put I-5 on piers using a combination of state and federal funding. Currently this is in discussion with elected officials in Olympia as well as DC. Funding depends on who controls Congress and the White House.

Staff Report - Tristan Olson

Maintaining an online presence in the midst of Covid-19 is still essential to promoting ongoing work and programs. If you would like NRC social media to share anything, contact Tristan at info@nisquallyriver.com. The Nisqually Community Forest has new social media accounts you can follow:

- [NCF Twitter](#)
- [NCF Facebook](#)
- [NCF Instagram](#)

Dani Madrone from the American Farmland Trust requested the NRC sign on to letters of support for the legislature to fund the Farmland Protection and Land Access (FPLA) & Sustainable Farms and Fields Programs ([American Farmland Trust NRC Presentation](#)).

NRC members asked how to navigate the fact that these are legislative issues that could be construed politically. When it is funding requests that affect the Nisqually Watershed, NRC can support those items. Both items were brought to a vote and endorsement was approved with no opposition and no abstaining.

Allied Program Reports:

Nisqually Land Trust - Jeanette Dorner

Jeanette worked with Joe to close on four properties simultaneously in two sets of two. The first set included the Buddhist priory where Brighton Creek flows into the Nisqually River. This floodplain parcel includes 1,700 feet of shoreline and 33 acres now in perpetuity with the Nisqually Land Trust (NLT) as well as another 37 acres of forest along Hart's Lake road which will become a preserve for the pileated woodpecker. The second set was two smaller parcels along Ohop Creek just across the stream from the Litzenbergers property. These parcels were owned by someone who passed away and they were put on the market. NLT contacted the real estate agent and closed on those just last week. One of the purchased properties went down from \$135,000 to \$29,000 after a landslide occurred and the Buddhist priory donated property that has a market value close to \$2.5 million.

It is the tail end of winter planting season with plantings taking place along the mainstem Nisqually and Anderson island. There is also the annual tree salvage event taking place. On Saturday, February 5th there is a site steward meeting where volunteers are trained on how to keep an eye on our properties, what to look for and how to keep and track that information. There is a good lineup of speakers, learn more and sign up on the NLT calendar.

The auction will be pushed from late March to early June in light of the current state of Covid-19 and will hopefully be an outside, hybrid event. Jeanette will present more on the 5-year Strategic Plan later in the meeting. Stay tuned for updates!

Nisqually River Education Project – Sheila Wilson

The Nisqually River Education Project (NREP) team has been busy putting together "take home" science kits so students can explore turbidity, pH, and stormwater modeling without NREP staff in the classroom. Salmon tossing has been going well with 141 students participating so far and tosses taking place this week between Ohop Creek and the Mashel River (a bobcat was captured on camera along the Mashel). The second teacher professional development under the NOAA BWET grant will take place on January 26th. It will focus on sharing DNR's Ocean Acidification curriculum created in partnership with University of Washington, and DNR's ANeMoNe (Acidification Nearshore Monitoring Network).

The 29th annual Student GREEN Congress will take place March 14-17 and the new logo has been created. Workshops with students will take place that Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday with Emily McCartan (Long Live the Kings) featured as the keynote speaker. Julia has been working on updating the water quality data map and will be presenting an update on that soon to NRC. January 25th will be the first of four workshops, "Systems for Sustainability: Organizational Change for Equity", with Sylvia Hadnot of E3 Washington. No Child Left Inside grant activities have once again been put on hold due to the ongoing pandemic, and some restructuring within the tribe's youth and education departments. NREP will reschedule these for the spring.

Nisqually River Foundation - Justin Hall

The budget has been approved at just over \$1.2 million with 26 different grant sources and \$270,000 remaining. NRF is still trying to find the best way to navigate the political arena. The Governor's budget has funding for environmental education with \$52 million attached to HB2048 (22nd Legislative Representative encouraged to cosponsor) for outdoor schools (Rainier Institute and YMCA).

Nisqually Community Forest - Justin Hall

The snow has settled in and Mount Tahoma Trails Association is actively using the roads for their foresters. There are three one-acre openings that have been cut in the forest to measure snow accumulation and eventually serve as planting areas for more southerly trees to accommodate climate change. If those trees can survive the first few years, then the hope is that they will thrive when they're 40 years old and the climate is warmer.

The Clean Water State Revolving Fund PISCES Program can be used for green infrastructure and the Nisqually Indian Tribe (NIT) received a \$14 million dollar loan at 1.2% interest from the Washington State Clean Water State Revolving Fund. to purchase lands that are contiguous to the NCF. Each state gets to nominate their projects for the award and the NIT project (slightly better waste treatment) was chosen and highlighted. This is the legacy of George F. Ames. Joe Kane pointed out that this started with the Washington Environmental council's push to get the clean water revolving project changed so that something like this could come to fruition and it is exciting to get the Department of Ecology and the local EPA group involved.

NCF & NIT forest total acreage is just over 4,000 acres ($2,880 + 1,201 = 4,081$). The snowpack is at or slightly above the average.

Salmon Recovery Program – Ashley Von Essen

There is a new designer for Yil Me Hu, Michelle Pugh, who has been a yoga instructor at the Nisqually youth center and done other design work with the Tribe. The current grant round is moving forward with seven projects which Ashley will present on at a future NRC meeting. Thank you to everyone who shared their Christmas tree for the herring spawning project.

Funding from EPA is being used to do an analysis on the trees planted by the Tribe's restoration crew. There are around 250,000 trees planted over 260 acres, not even counting ones planted by NLT and NREP volunteers. This has been taking place since 2007 so they have looked at a lot of the critical planting sites with some doing well and others not. A lot of those acres do not have stewardship funds - NIT is always looking for more funding, but it's never enough to go out and care for those lands in total.

3. Sentinel Landscape Partnership - JBLM SLPP

Dan Calvert

The Sentinel Landscape Partnership (SLP) Program is a coalition formed in 2013 made up of Federal agencies, State and local governments, and non-governmental organizations that work with private landowners to advance sustainable land management practices around military installations and ranges. It's mission is to strengthen military readiness, conserve natural resources, bolster agricultural and forestry economies, and increase climate change resilience.

Local partners are the DOD, NRCS, and USFWS and most of the active local partners are in Thurston County. There are seven of these landscapes around the country connected to military installations with JBLM being the first landscape that caught the attention of the

DOD who wanted to scale it up across the country. The main focus is on prairie habitat and sensitive species within those prairies.

The goal is to change how the military can train and function, reduce encroachment, and operate on a property without as many restrictions. Much of the habitat in the area has been developed and JBLM has 90% of the prairie habitat left undeveloped. Meaning it is one of the last strongholds for species such as the Mazama pocket gopher, Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, and the streaked horned lark (all ESA listed species). These listings can impact how the military is able to function, so they want to have a buffer in place to increase training and flexibility on the base and limit negative public interactions. The way to do this is to increase the conservation areas surrounding the base.

There are amazing collaborations that can exist between agriculture and the conservation community. Dani mentioned in a pasty meeting how farmers are under a huge amount of pressure to sell their properties to developers. Farms are much better than developments, once a place is developed the natural environment is gone and has zero conservation value.

DOD has done a lot of work on climate resilience, understanding how climate change might affect resource scarcity, and landscape in general. The Readiness Environmental Protection Integration Program has been a large source of funding. Applying has helped SLP identify priorities for future work and proposals even though the project proposed didn't pass. SLP is dedicated to finding off base mitigation opportunities so that they face fewer regulations on base. Dan is coordinating the different groups to make this happen at the levels of leadership, planning and implementation, and technical support.

Implementation Plan Priorities

- Rural land protection - identify and promote voluntary incentives to preserve lands
- Community tools and resources - simplifying regulatory processes for landowners
- Habitat restoration and stewardship - protecting remaining environments
- Outreach and communication - working with private landowners to identify objectives

Collaboration Opportunities

- Working with partners in Pierce County
- Working with the Nisqually Tribe
- Future funding proposals
- Future ESA listings on JBLM

SLP is not currently focused on salmon and aquatic ecosystems, however collaborating with NLT, NIT, and Pierce County Conservation District is a large priority. If there is a larger role to play in the recovery efforts around Muck Creek, what does that collaboration look like?

The formation of JBLM took a large chunk of the Nisqually Reservation and currently coordinates with the Tribe and wants to continue to collaborate with them since the land overlaps.

Ecostudies Institute is one of SLP's key partners especially related to traditional tribal burning and sharing other ecological practices. SLP is also concerned with how the community can collaborate on future funding opportunities towards projects where priorities overlap by using some of the weight that comes with the military.

There currently are aquatic listed species on JBLM such as steelhead trout and chum, which have been a candidate for years. We should be focusing on landscape management for the entire basin, seeing how we can solve multiple ESA related issues. Will you be able to push this effort in the future?

You're right, it has been piecemeal efforts with a focus on certain species and not on the ecosystem as a whole so this is a new way to look at it, the focus is currently on prairie species, but as you pointed out everything is connected. We would like to collaborate and expand on this.

David Troutt mentioned that JBLM's 2020 sustainable futures commitment talks about contributing to the recovery effort of all ESA listed species from around Puget Sound, so it is a part of their mission already. We should spend some time with you at the Tribe and Nisqually Land Trust and discuss mitigation, restoration, and acquisition opportunities. We've got some ideas that we've presented to JBLM in the past, but maybe now is the time to resurface those ideas.

Sarah Montero, the JBLM Stormwater Project Manager, mentioned some of the disconnect is that as a federal installation JBLM is limited by regulations and drivers and the ESA species present there have historically been tied to terrestrial areas, so there needs to be an additional push to make that connection between land and water. Some type of regulation regarding buffer zones to require the work along the creeks would be helpful.

David Troutt stated we need to change the conversation so that the regulatory direction is not the maximum that we do, but the minimum that needs to be done. Commissioner Gary Edwards also wants to connect with Dan Calvert.

Jeanette Dorner stated that there are overlapping priorities with woodland and prairie habitats. There is potential to strategize and take advantage of this and she would like to collaborate on priorities, especially around Muck Creek regarding oak woodland habitat and

the Steelhead and Chum salmon populations. A JBLM civilian fish and wildlife department representative was saying that it makes sense to consider salmon as well. Rene, Jeanette, David, and Gary, would all like to meet more with Dan (dan@sentinel landscapes.org, 5033131255).

4. Ptarmigan Listing - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Terry Frederick

Mt. Rainier White-tailed Ptarmigan are a subspecies of ptarmigan, found throughout Washington state and somewhat over the Canadian border. The white-tailed ptarmigan species as a whole has a large range. The species includes the Southern, Northern, Kenai, and Vancouver Island white-tailed ptarmigan.

Population Units (based on habitat and history of WDFW observations):

- Mt St Helens - After May 19, 1980 they are no longer found
- Mt Adams - not many
- Goat Rocks - not many
- William O. Douglas - habitat, but no observations
- Mount Rainier - quite a few
- Alpine Lakes
- North Cascades West - majority
- North Cascades East - majority

They are cryptic birds and both the males and females have a white tail. Their winter plumage is all white and they molt slowly in the spring to blend in with the transition period. There are three species of ptarmigan in the world: Rock Ptarmigan (most common, black tail, not observed in Washington), City Grouse or Blue Grouse (large and like a chicken or turkey), and the Spruce Grouse or Ruffed Grouse (bird of the forest).

Mt Rainier White-Tailed Ptarmigan adapt well for the winter:

- Gain weight
- Low metabolic rates conserve energy
- Low evaporative cooling efficiency
- White Plumage
- Feathered feet
- Snow roosts

They eat willow bushes which stick out of the snow as well as alder and other deciduous species in higher latitudes of British Columbia. Ptarmigan live at or slightly below treeline, but not below subalpine so as to remain in meadows and not the forest. During the breeding season, males will form and defend territories and mate with one female. The areas they defend need to have a variety of factors, but especially moist forbs high in protein to eat as well as rocks for nests and cover from predators such as golden eagles and falcons. Red and white heather are also common food sources as well as the dwarf willow. Chicks will eat insects and then only eat foliage once they are older.

In July and September they will form flocks and stay in flocks throughout the winter. Ptarmigans are found where there is snow which is used for foliage, cooling, or as a water supply - they have been filmed eating the snow.

How Climate Change Projections will influence Ptarmigan Habitat

Areas of permanent snow cover will recede, there will be more bare vegetation, and the treeline is going to rise. The glaciers will permanently disappear, snow will disappear, and tree lines will rise to the top of the mountains.

Abiotic Climate Variables (from USGS)

- Snow water equivalent (how well forests will be maintained)
- Maximum summer temperatures (they exhibit heat stress at 70 degrees fahrenheit)
- Days above 30 degrees celsius (although above 20 degrees would also impact ptarmigan)
- Soil Moisture

Glacial meltwater modeling and vegetation change modeling indicates habitat will be significantly decreased by 2090 and the MC2 vegetation model for 2040 - 2069 also indicates the area will significantly decrease. Another study from British Columbia showed that all ptarmigan populations are expected to decline based on their current habitat and projected distribution of habitat. This means that Mt Rainier White-Tailed Ptarmigan will not be able to survive simply by moving further north into British Columbia (reduced in distribution by 86%) and the gap between habitable areas will continue to grow.

Based on what ptarmigan populations need now and habitat variables that will be affected by climate change, Mount Rainier will still function as a good habitat and Mount Adams may be fair or good, but all other areas will be poor habitats and none of these areas will be very good. Based on these projections it is proposed for listing as not endangered, but threatened.

If the ptarmigan is listed these are the next steps:

- Recovery Outline
- Recovery Plan
- Federal Agencies Consult

The land in which they exist is almost entirely federal land, the question faced is: what can be done to increase the resiliency of this species within a changing climate? These alpine species will be affected disproportionately due to elevation dependent warming. In order to increase climate resilience, better modeling needs to be created and refuge sites need to be discovered and managed.

Sobering, but this puts a fine point on the changes of climate change and how a particular species will be directly affected by the climate.

One of the largest variables when discussing what the effects of climate change will be is what people will do when they start to take this seriously which will determine if the changes are more subtle or extreme.

Audubon has stated climate change is their number one priority regarding threats to bird populations and they have modeled many species. Do you know how these projections compare with other avian species?

Many species will be impacted negatively especially arctic and subalpine species, and some others will improve. They did not model ptarmigans however. This just goes to show how connected ptarmigan and salmon are with their reliance on glaciers and the importance of retaining permanent snow.

During the listing phase of Chinook we wanted to include climate change in NOAA's listing and it was taken out, however the bigger existential threats need to be included and addressed otherwise it is more challenging to talk about it in the larger societal discussions (it can get political, but carbon emissions need to be reduced) - would hope that NOAA now has a different perspective as it continues to impact how we navigate stewardship.

5. Nisqually Land Trust - 5 Year Strategic Plan

Jeanette Dorner

The NLT Board has approved a draft of the 5-Year Strategic Plan and before it is finalized, it is being shared with partners for feedback. If anyone would like a more detailed overview and specific language, they can contact [Jeanette Dorner](#).

New Draft Mission: Protect and steward lands to permanently benefit the water, wildlife, and people of the Nisqually River Watershed.

This plan developed an updated draft vision, one for the entire watershed as well as one for the Land Trust as an organization.

Watershed Draft Vision

- Thriving and resilient fish, wildlife, and plants
- Abundant Salmon
- Healthy and functioning streams, forests, prairies, and shorelines

- Opportunities for Tribal people to practice their culture and traditions
- Communities that are vibrant, sustainable, and intentional stewards
- Sustainable working farms and forests

- Clean and cold waters
- Low Impact recreation opportunities
- Equitable Public Access
- Stewardship Partnerships

Land Trust Draft Vision

- Broad and diverse community support and engagement
- Diverse, dedicated board of directors and staff
- Proper facilities
- Strong and cooperative partnerships
- Stable and abundant financial support

Values

- Conservation and Stewardship
- Leadership and Innovation
- Sustainability
- Integrity
- Partnership
- Cooperation and Collaboration
- Respect
- Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Honoring the Rights of Native People
- Climate Connectivity and Ecosystem Resiliency

Goals

- Protect, steward, and connect more people with the lands
- Increase and diversify revenue sources, develop long term financial management tools
- Ensure organizational effectiveness

New ways to engage with the public and increase their awareness and support of the Nisqually Land Trust has a renewed focus in this plan. As does the focus put upon prairies and oak woodland habitats as important factors in the watershed. Updating the conservation plan with a new focus on climate to guide which projects the Land Trust focuses on.

How do you wrestle with providing public access while still protecting the shoreline?

The deed of rights given to granting agencies after land purchases can limit public access, so a detailed review would be necessary before trails or signage would be allowed. NLT is looking for ways to increase access and looking for other properties with the express idea of creating public access trails. People want to protect what they know and they love what they

know which is why we want to increase these opportunities. Capital Land Trust is doing something along these lines and it is taking

6. For the Good of the Order

Rene Skaggs

Dana Coggin is the new Executive Director for the Pierce Conservation District, she comes from the Kitsap noxious weed control board. There are now two foresters based out of the Mason Conservation District that are being shared with others. There will be a webinar workshop and then a field day and these foresters are available to go to forest properties in Mason, Kitsap, Pierce, and Thurston County.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:06pm.

*Next meeting: Friday, February 18, 2022
Online*