



Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council Meeting
November 19, 2021
Online Meeting

Attendees:

NRC Members:

Jesse Barham – City of Olympia
Amy Cruver – Pierce County Council
Cathy Hamilton-Wissmer – JBLM

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

CAC Members:

Phyllis Farrell
Ed Kenney

Linda Murtfeldt
Lois Ward

Guests

Roger Andrascik – NLT/NSS
Jeff Barney – Pierce County
Warren Bergh – NLT/NSS
Jeff Bowe – Pierce County
Eric Casino - Citizen
Gary Edwards – Thurston County
Martin McCallum – NLT/NSS
Sarah Montero – JBLM
Sarah Motsenbocker – Pierce County

Jeremy Perkuhn - Nisqually Indian Tribe
Annette Pitts – Experience Olympia
Julie Rector – City of Lacey
Etsuko Reistroffer - Stream Steward
Lisa Spurrier – Pierce County
Larry Stickney - Pierce County Council
Juliana Tadano - Puget Sound Partnership
Jodie Toft – Puget Sound Restoration Fund
Ashley Von Essen – Nisqually Indian Tribe

Staff:

Jeanette Dorner – NLT
Julia Fregonara – NRF
Justin Hall - NRF
Nantz McMillen – NRF

Tristan Olson - NRF
Layne Perkins - NRF
Sheila Wilson - NRF

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

David called the meeting to order at 9:05am. Attendees introduced themselves. Minutes were approved, as was the agenda for the day.

2. Committee Reports and Updates

Advisory Committee Reports:

CAC Report - Phyllis Farrell

CAC met on Tuesday and discussed how Tacoma Public Utilities and Thurston County showed a high degree of cooperation in mitigating a potential November Nisqually flood when most Western Washington rivers were flooding. Discussion was held on the draft Shoreline Master Plan being considered by the county as well as the concerns of spreading biosolids – regulation/bans. David spoke on issues associated with hatcheries.

Chair Report – David Troutt

David attended the November CAC meeting. The I-5 Nisqually bridge project is moving forward including a finalized MOU with WSDOT giving the Tribe co-decision making authority on the issue of the delta when construction begins in the next three or four years. The purpose and intent of the MOU – NEPA involves alternatives and cost analysis related to project specifics, not related to code work. Regarding the 6PPD tire dust issue, a federal task force is looking into it as well as state agencies. Hopefully there will be industry supported solutions as well as storm water treatment solutions.

Met with Sen. Cantwell's staff in regards to allocating more funding to salmon recovery as well as setting up a tour with the Senator who continues to be supportive of salmon recovery efforts.

Allied Program Reports:

Nisqually Land Trust - Jeanette Dorner

NLT recently closed on two properties. Litzenberger was willing to sell the whole property – 35 acres, including 2,200 feet of Ohop Creek shoreline. This secures the property for floodplain restoration and eliminates development of up to 37 residences, which would have severely impacted the spawning grounds. NLT also purchased 10 acres of floodplain in the lower Ohop from Marcia Berger. Working on more acquisitions hoping to close by the end of the year.

Nature walks are continuing with mushroom walks and bird walks (well attended). Flood event last week in Ohop area – Peterson Road was closed and 5 or 6 feet of river bank erosion near Miller property. Tree planting going well and wrapping up on Tuesday, November 23rd. Thankful for NREP partnership, planting will start up again next year.

New Finance and Operations hire - Jeff Barret, used to work at Intel and own an art gallery downtown. Board voted to approve two new board members Todd Lovshin & Barbara Semora – retired from Mount Rainier National Park. Board sharing final draft of new five-year strategic plan with partners for feedback before finalizing.

Nisqually River Education Project - Julia Fregonara

COVID restrictions and bus driver shortage limited the number of kids able to participate. Five school groups were involved. Expanding to include Wa He Lut 7th and 8th graders for field trips.

Layne & Julia: 512 students were involved in the water quality project – many from North Thurston Public School District. Live Zoom sessions from McLane creek and salmon dissections happening this month. First Kennedy Creek teacher training session took place on

November 3rd which highlighted the Chum salmon run, NOAA West Coast Salmon Climate Vulnerability Assessment, and other current, local climate change related news.

Olympia Tumwater Foundation – plan for \$7.5 million environmental project to educate on Tribal and Pioneer history. New event center will have a capacity of 150 indoors and 200 outdoors. Paul Williams working with Puget Sound Environmental Education Partnership providing input with E3 about how environmental educators can be included. Planning Mount Rainier snowshoeing event (No Child Left Inside).

EPA grant – Get the students up to speed on what it would be like to be in natural resources careers and represent tribal interests in the community. CTE program through North Thurston schools (college credit). This will include Mount Rainier Institute, Nisqually Reach Nature Center, Tribal Council, and others.

Nisqually River Foundation - Justin Hall

Hired Tristan as NRC Program Coordinator. Participated in Watershed councils. The Muck Creek grant officially started – determining where the water is coming from and what properties are important to look at for NLT long term conservation.

Nisqually Community Forest - Justin Hall

Finished harvest operations (now snowing – Mount Tahoma trail association using the roads). Moving gates interrupted by snow – will most likely be put in place in spring. Looking for new loggers next year as 960 acres come online, 1200 acres with Nisqually Tribe. Want to make the forest more diverse and a pre-commercial thin could remove trees so that it is not overly dense. National Resource Conservation Service - EQIP program funding.

Jeannette and Justin took JT Wilcox to the forest he has helped fund through the Legislature and showed him active harvesting. He wants to see those properties opened for seasonal hunting – what will that look like next year? Working with Dan Calvert – program proposal to help purchase properties that will lessen threats to military training while simultaneously benefiting Steelhead and Chinook in the upper watershed (Muck Creek and prairies).

Salmon Recovery Program – David Troutt

Working on EPA grants and preparing salmon spawning project involving recycling of Christmas trees. Chris will be providing more information. In the first week of December, a storm water project with Long Live the Kings will install an eight by ten box to filter water, assessing effectiveness to remove 6PPD (tire dust) – at least two years of study and potentially three to follow up research Jen McIntyre has done. If this is successful, it could be applied throughout the watershed and beyond.

Salmon runs: Coho spawning at tributaries (fairly low this year). Wild component is fairly stable, however hatchery is falling. Will be eliminating current hatchery stock. Rebuilding Kalama creek hatchery to reestablish wild populations. Chinook was double last year's run. Fall Chum run in South Sound doubled from what we thought (fall and winter seem to operate independently). No fishing until we are sure the run has been successful due to forecasting of low numbers. Chum can rebound quickly (can double quickly) late chum should be in Nisqually next week hopefully.

Installing new short-range camera in fish ladder in the coming weeks (can differentiate sex in fish once calibrated – will be better next year.) Purchased long range camera for lower Nisqually to estimate spawning escapement. In one year, we could have a presentation (more sonar images – 3D images of baby chum salmon).

3. Bountiful Byways – Experience Olympia & Beyond

Annette Pitts & Jeff Bowe

Permission was given to record this presentation. Contact info@nisquallyriver.org for a link to the recording. Experience Olympia is an economic development organization promoting travel and experiences in the community while emphasizing dispersion. Want to do this responsibly with sustainability and pandemic safety at the forefront of how we structure the mission of tourism.

Impact on Nisqually: Recovery; Discovery; Craft the Destination; Deploy communications both to travelers and the community; track, measure, evaluate, adjust, repeat; build the economy.

Travelers might want one thing and stakeholders might want another. Part of crafting the destination includes the Bountiful Byway. We are creating more tools so that we can be more scientific in our approach – hoping to support the local economy in this process. In creating the destination development plan & mid-range strategic plan we welcome Nisqually organizations to have a seat at the table regarding how to promote these areas.

Community and product development / partnerships: Interpretive Signage, Bountiful Byway has great signage on the byway, but how do you tell people that it is there from I-5? Would need to designate it as an official byway through corridor management planning process which involves speaking with land management entities and having impact discussions. Then would need to approach the State Legislature to change RCWs that designate byways.

Tread App: Central Washington outdoor recreation focus, but now partnering with Experience Olympia. The intent is to tell people the places that they can go outdoors while taking into consideration dispersion and highlighting nearby opportunities such as restaurants

and more. We want to bring people to the area, but know that we have to do it through this lens of public health and safety / dispersion.

Bountiful Byway – road tripping is wildly popular (no signs of slowing) – need for a corridor management plan for formal designation – actively pursuing this. What areas should we promote and what areas should we not promote?

Discussion

Is there a way to connect our stewardship with the pull that you have in bringing people to the region?

We will be redesigning our website, perhaps a guest blog on how to be a steward for the people who want to visit (voice a traveler will be receptive too). Example: If you enjoy it – here is a way to support it and the other programs connected to it. Then list the programs that are connected to the places people are enjoying. Experience Olympia used to be a membership organization, but dismantled that this year.

NLT is interested in increasing public access to areas and mentions this in the draft five-year plan. Would like to partner with the larger Nisqually community to discuss ways to view and experience the Nisqually watershed.

Community development is something we want to do. Wenatchee is linking public access to conservation land use. Using participation in trail maintenance to educate others on sustainability. We should work together to maximize assets, but keep them how we want them to be (looking for resources and expertise to do that).

NRF can send along Things to do in the Nisqually Watershed information. Troll artist is looking at the PNW and possibly Nisqually Watershed to create a trail of troll sculptures that could become a large pull for tourism.

4. Levee Update

Jeff Barney & Sarah Motsenbocker

There has been recurring damage to the levee with constant repairs from 1991 to 2017 and so this project placed 28 rock deflectors (80 by 30 feet) to push the water away from the structure – 4,760 ft of levee treated. There is 80 inches of rain annually and the area is very dynamic which can impact the levee during major flood events (Sunshine campsite was washed out in mid 2000s). County code mandates that you cannot increase the rise of the river and so we tried to buy flood easements however, could not get all of them and so had to shrink and change two deflectors so that it wouldn't raise the level of the river by one inch.

3D modeling was done to map out velocities and create slower pools near the levee. Construction took place July 19th through October 14th and cost 2.8 million dollars (\$2,822,822) – awarded to ACI. We shifted the channel away from the project area and relocated cutthroat trout, sculpin, and legged frogs.

[Upper Nisqually Channel Migration Protection – Video and Pictures](#)

Recent rainfall / flooding event: deflectors pushed flows away from levee structure at 9,300 cfs. Good test to the system and pleased how it performed. (16 were engaged during the event) – wood racking occurred as well.

Revegetation plan – plantings along the levee face will be replaced with bare root plants (mulch and soil was being placed this past week).

Discussion

How significantly was the bid affected by Covid/supplies problems?

The contractor did end up losing money due to the rock (the quarry wasn't able to produce the rocks that they assumed they could) – in the future we will be more aware of how much rock is needed – do not assume you can blast things and have it there right when you need it.

Will climate change make it impossible to protect the structure (record rain flows and an increase in sediment load continually)?

We hope that the structures will buy us some time. Designed to withstand 100-year event, but did not necessarily bring climate change perspective into the development process. Hoping that these will build gravel bars and form vegetation and be there if that is washed away. Hoping that this will last for another 25 to 50 years.

I hope that Pierce County and the park are thinking long term. To relocate the road is an act of congress, and to where would you move it and what about the gate and historic entrance?

Not a certified levee, but this was to address the constant repairs needed.

5. Kelp Exploration

Jodie Toft

Puget Sound Restoration Fund is a small nonprofit based on Bainbridge Island and as a marine ecologist it is exciting to see so much attention paid to a hidden underwater environment as the momentum around kelp continues to grow.

Mission: design, test, and spearhead in-water actions to restore Puget Sound's habitat. Bull Kelp is a seaweed and we are a biodiversity hotspot for kelp in the world – [Exploring Puget Sound's Kelp Forest Story Map](#)

Bull kelp is a canopy kelp growing from the bottom up to the surface and acts as a lifeway for marine life and humans (who used to use the bulbs to mold fishing hooks). As it goes around the coast of the continent it forms this nutrient rich "Kelp Highway". The blade itself grows one to two feet per day and seasonally bull kelp sends packages elsewhere to reproduce. As blades sluff away, they provide nutrients to the area – food and habitat on the shore when it washes up – young salmon, rockfish, crabs, and more in the water. That nutrition moves up through the food web with kelp serving as an anchor.

Teaming up with UW & NOAA, through the Sea Farm Paul G Allen Family Foundation grant – we can start understanding if kelp could have a mitigating role in ocean acidification. A kelp farm in Hood Canal grew kelp very well (PBC tubes seeded with kelp so that it grows along a line in the water), but we could not pick up a signal whether it was having a large effect relating to acidity. Kelp has helped with oyster and muscle growth though (could be the sloughing or could be water quality).

Historically Kelp in South Sound was abundant, now the most recent observations show that it is mostly near the narrows and Squaxin Island. There are several reasons for this decline: increased sediment, temperature, and herbivory (many factors). Can the kelp beds be brought back though? Spools attached to pyramids underwater are being used to grow kelp with the main question being if it will reproduce and regrow next year. We will continue to monitor this effort.

The Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan (May 2020) has been funded by the legislature for \$1.5 million.

The Expedition: Eight days in July, 2021 with 184 participants. Started in freshwater bay, monitored kelp forest, collected samples to see where microplastics land on kelp plants. Monitored kelp from the air, land, and sea using drones, kayaks, and remotely operated vehicles. Found good and healthy kelp spots right under the Seattle waterfront. Expedition involved Muckleshoot Tribe speakers and it ended in Olympia.

What can you do? Help spread the kelp-story. Reduce carbon emissions and pollution in any way you can. Watch upcoming PBS episode: The Living Shores.

Discussion

Urchins are a big part of the problem in California and removal is important with the loss of otter populations.

The pyramids do not move at all, the long lines move around too much though so we are working on a new anchoring system. Everything that is put into the ocean has to come out.

How important is it to have the land owners onboard with the restoration spots? Do you get any permits?

You have to have an incredible amount of buy-in from landowners, property owners, and property managers which is why we have such a large coalition of partners and we would like to connect with NLT.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:54am.

*Next meeting: Friday, December 17, 2021
Online*