



**Meeting Minutes  
Nisqually River Council Meeting  
February 19, 2021  
Online Meeting**

*Attendees:*

**NRC Members:**

Anne Baxter – Dept. of Ecology  
Dan Calvert – Puget Sound Partnership  
Stacey Dixon – UW Pack Forest  
Gary Edwards – Thurston County  
Terry Kaminski – City of Yelm  
Rebecca Kowalski – JBLM

Dani Madrone – City of Olympia  
Darrin Masters – WDFW  
Lee Roach - DNR  
Larry Stickney – Pierce County  
David Troutt, chair – Nisqually Indian Tribe

**CAC Members:**

Phyllis Farrell  
Howard Glastetter  
Paula Holroyde

Ed Kenney  
Martin McCallum  
Lois Ward

**Guests:**

Roger Andrascik – NLT/NSS  
Jesse Barham – City of Olympia  
Jeff Barney – Pierce County  
Warren Bergh – NLT/NSS  
Annette Bullchild – Nisqually Indian Tribe  
Chris Chisholm – Wolf Camp  
Lloyd Fetterly – NLT/NSS  
Daniel Hull – NRNC

Sarah Montero – JBLM  
Linda Murdfeldt  
Julie Rector – City of Lacey  
Etsuko Reistroffer – NSS  
Eric Rosane – Nisqually Valley News  
Pete Stoltz – CalPortland  
Ashley Von Essen – Nisqually Indian Tribe

**Staff:**

Jeanette Dorner – NLT  
Julia Fregonara – NRF  
Justin Hall – NRF

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 9:04am. The birth of a new Southern Resident orca is something to celebrate, although many have read the recent Outside magazine interview with Ken Balcomb article stressing the urgent crisis of the whales. Minutes were approved, as was the agenda for the day.

**2. Committee Reports and Updates**

**Advisory Committee Reports:**

*CAC Report – Phyllis Farrell*

The CAC met last week. Members shared updates on the Sequelitchew Creek agreement, TPU management questions, Nisqually State Park, and legislative updates including HB

1372, which would put a statue of Billy Frank Jr. in the national Capitol. The CAC also discussed the proposal by Idaho Representative Mike Simpson to breach the Snake River dams. David noted that the survival of Nisqually steelhead through Puget Sound is worse than survival of Snake River Chinook and steelhead. Dam removal is important for overall recovery, but we lose as many steelhead in two weeks of migration through Puget Sound as the Snake and Columbia stocks lose to the dams, and need a similar investment.

*Chair Report – David Troutt*

David is engaged in several bills moving through the Legislature, including the Billy Frank Jr. statue bill and HB 1117, which is an attempt to incorporate salmon recovery into comprehensive planning under the Growth Management Act. The bill has good intentions, but needs rigorous accountability measures to ensure certainty of action from local governments. David and others have noted concerns that if the bill passes in its current state without adequate accountability measures, it will be more difficult to put them in place later. Other concerns include transferring mitigation between watersheds within a county. The I-5 project (state budget request of \$204 million in this year's budget) is continuing and gaining momentum with presentations to local planning entities. An editorial in The Olympian last month drew positive attention from elected officials.

The UW/WSU researchers on toxic tire chemicals (who presented to the NRC in December 2020) are presenting their findings in numerous other forums and gaining attention for the issue. Several bills have been introduced on this issue. The Nisqually Tribe is moving forward with partners including WSDOT, Long Live The Kings, and Ecology to pilot a new compost treatment technology to remove chemicals from road runoff, hoping to implement it on Highway 7 crossing the Ohop. The technology has been shown to remove multiple toxins which impact fish and the hope is that it will be effective against 6PPD-quinone. The March Puget Sound Salmon Recovery meeting will honor the graduate students who have spent years working on this problem.

The Nisqually Tribe is close to finalizing their first forestry acquisition to be managed through the Nisqually Community Forest. The Tribe is also moving forward with installing Christmas trees in the tidal zone to encourage and study herring spawning. David and Willie Frank will participate in an upcoming webinar with Long Live The Kings on February 25 to discuss this project and the need for changes to I-5 at the Delta.

*Staff Report – Emily McCartan*

A draft letter encouraging Thurston County to pursue on-site studies of RAP piles, requested by the NRC at the previous meeting, was circulated and reviewed. Members discussed whether to mention Gilliardi's facility or other potential sites, and decided to omit specific sites and let the county identify locations to study. The NRC added a sentence offering our support for making connections with university or other researchers if desired. The Nisqually Tribe has had some conversations with staff in Olympia and possibly Lacey about this issue. By consensus, the NRC approved sending the letter as edited to the Thurston Board of County Commissioners and Pierce County Council.

The final draft of the updated Nisqually Watershed Stewardship Plan was circulated prior to the meeting. Emily requested any final updates and approval from the NRC. The plan was approved by consensus and will be posted online. The plan includes several areas for further discussion, including future membership updates and defining a new goal and indicators supporting diversity and environmental justice. Changes can be proposed and approved any time, but this version is expected to govern the NRC until 2030. Members noted that the Plan is a helpful guide for new NRC members, and may be a useful model for the Deschutes and other watersheds to use in planning efforts. The NWSP update is the core deliverable of the Nisqually River Foundation's WaterSmart Cooperative Management grant from the Bureau of Reclamation, which funded a large portion of the work to develop it. The NWSP was approved by consensus.

### **Allied Program Reports:**

#### *Nisqually Land Trust – Jeanette Dorner*

The NLT is planning alternate events in lieu of the usual annual auction in March, with a virtual event in June and hopes for an in-person event later in the year. Land Steward Addie Schussel is moving to Wisconsin and will be missed. NRC members are invited to share the position when posted. Planting season is wrapping up this week, with invasive species removal and tube pulling work parties coming next. Community Forest acquisitions are moving forward in partnership with Community Forest and Tribe. NLT and partners have met with legislators about the state community forest grant program (Nisqually's project is ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>, and would be funded if the program is funded at the governor's request level). NLT is working on re-verification of carbon credits held by Microsoft, a regular process, and on a new carbon initiative with BlueSource.

#### *Nisqually River Education Project – Sheila Wilson*

Take-home hands-on science kits are available for teachers for this winter's water quality monitoring activities. Feedback from teachers has been very positive, including that they help use science as the anchor point for language, reading, and math. Virtual Student GREEN Congress will take place in March. NREP is creating a storymap, and will have virtual workshops that include take-home kits for students. Looking forward, NREP is developing a field science program for all 5<sup>th</sup> graders in North Thurston Public Schools. It may be a useful model to expand work with other districts, including Yelm, which has not participated in NREP programs since 2019. Grant applications are in development for NFWF, ALEA, No Child Left Inside, Rose Foundation and NOAA BWET. The BWET grant has an opportunity to fund training for staff and partners on diversity, equity, and inclusion. NCLI grant was interrupted because of COVID, but starting to resume activities and excited to apply for the next round with Tribal partners. Sheila has had an initial conversation with Hanford McCloud, who is working to reach out to local teachers on traditional ecological knowledge and Since Time Immemorial with outdoor education opportunities.

#### *Nisqually River Foundation – Justin Hall*

The NRF Board will meet this afternoon to approve the 2021 budget. NRF is welcoming new board members: James "Junior" Slape, Nisqually Tribal member and Nisqually Natural resources Manager, and Karen Andrascik, a former NREP teacher. The Foundation's five major projects continue to be: staffing the NRC; NREP; supporting the Water Planning Unit;

Nisqually Community Forest; and contract employees for the Tribe and the Refuge. Full funding is secured for the first half of the year, with strong prospects for the second half. Justin plans to attend the Pierce County hearing scheduled on the proposed Park Junction Resort at Ashford, whose permits have been updated several times in the 26-year history of the project and are set to expire due to lack of movement. Justin has met with legislators regarding renewed funding for the Nisqually River Council, which is important because the NRC's core activities are difficult to fund through grants. He is also working on legislation for the community forest grant program and is on the committee working on the Billy Frank Jr. Statuary Hall bill. The statue will be funded through private donations, but requires legislative approval and a state account to manage it.

#### *Community Forest – Justin Hall*

A 2,200 acre acquisition is nearing completion, with a combined purchase by the Land Trust to be transferred to the Community Forest, and by the Nisqually Tribe's Clean Water Revolving Fund loan, to be managed by the Community Forest. The next purchase would protect the north fork of the upper Busy Wild.

#### *Salmon Recovery Program – Ashley Von Essen*

Final applications were due last week for this year's SRFB funding round. Nisqually has four applications, three from NLT and one from SPSSEG. Ashley will present on them next month. This is a "small" year, with \$400,000 in SRFB funding available. Virtual site visits with the SRFB review panel are scheduled for next Wednesday. The Tribe's planting crew is working on Middle Nisqually plantings. Yil Me Hu is in production and will be distributed by mail and electronically next month. Last year's publication was disrupted due to the pandemic. David applauded the hard work and science behind the salmon recovery plans, which drive a huge portion of the work discussed at the NRC, from the community forest to watershed planning.

David provided an update on salmon returns, season setting, and concerns for Nisqually salmon. The species of greatest concern in Nisqually right now is the late chum, which have not met escapement goals for last 7 years. It is a unique run genetically and in timing, evolved to adapt to the intermittent prairie system in the Nisqually. They have been a candidate for listing under the ESA three times but are not listed. It may be time to revisit that, given evidence that the stocks are struggling. Nisqually's preseason forecast for last year was 25,000 and the actual run was 13,000. The year before, the run was 5,000. Chum have been a candidate for listing under the ESA three times; it may be time now. North of Falcon meetings are discussing whether fisheries need to be restricted. All chum returns in Puget Sound are in trouble, including the late-October "normal-timed" chum, which are forecasted to return 30% lower than historical 1 million. Marine conditions (marine mammal predation, temperatures, ocean acidification, and toxins) seem to be the driver. California sea lion populations follow chum salmon through Puget Sound and have a significant impact, and current regulations on marine mammal take are not realistic to manage predation. Managers are pursuing several paths, including sonic deterrents, but most solutions may require congressional action. A bill in the Legislature would fund research about the sustainable population level for marine mammals. Steelhead and chum are the essential fish of the Nisqually, and chum need more focus and effort. The Tribe's agenda for this year

includes drafting a scientifically-based recovery plan for chum to help drive project priorities, which they will share with the NRC.

Gary Edwards asked about an update on the Victoria wastewater treatment facility. It is now online, but is not likely to address the issue of tire chemical runoff, because most stormwater runoff from roads does not go through wastewater treatment.

### **3. Yelm Wastewater Reclamation Facility Update**

*Cody Colt, Yelm Public Works Director*

Yelm's current Wastewater Reclamation Facility (WRF) treats 600,000 gallons of wastewater daily. 50,000 gallons a day are sent to Cochrane Park for recharge, and reclaimed water is used for irrigating city parks, schools, and green space. Everything left over is sent to the Nisqually River through the Centralia Power Canal. Waste activated sludge is currently sent to Shelton for processing.

Cody shared a recorded video tour of the WRF. A new plant is scheduled to be built later this year, which will increase the capacity to meet future development needs. It will replace the current sequencing batch reactor (SBR) with a membrane-based reactor (MBR), which can operate more efficiently and on a smaller footprint. Yelm also plans to build a facility to dry sludge on site and create Class A biosolids as a fertilizer product. Treating solid waste on site is less expensive and safer than having to truck it to Shelton. In addition to the need for upgrades to the flows into Cochrane Park, the new WRF facility is needed to meet the large increase in demand that is expected when Yelm receives its new water right (currently in review by Ecology), which will allow significant amounts of growth. The project is scaled to meet future demand as projected through 2045, processing up to 1.5 million gallons per day. If needed, the SBR at the current facility could be retrofit to increase capacity even further.

The City has applied for funding for the new WRF through a loan program with Ecology, and is working with Parametric on a design. The next steps are to seek city council approval for construction, upgrades to Cochrane park outfall, and adding the biodryer to process and create Class A biosolids. The biosolid fertilizer will be used on city and school properties initially, and maybe eventually sold. Class A biosolids, distinct from sludge, are dried and processed material that looks like dry, fine granules. They are rigorously tested more than normal fertilizer and a highly productive growing material.

#### *Discussion:*

- Washington has very high standards for reclaimed water (higher than California drinking water).
- Ed has been very involved in monitoring this issue with the city, and he congratulated Cody and WRF manager Bill Van Buskirk on making the major improvements the system needed.
- What happens to Yelm stormwater and is it treated? – Stormwater is largely infiltrated through rock beds on site. Some areas discharge to Yelm Creek. There are no stormwater intrusion issues at the current Yelm wastewater plant. Cody will come back with a full presentation for the NRC later this year. Stormwater intrusion is a major concern in many jurisdictions and needs an integrated approach to address –

within LOTT, Lacey has made improvements and there are still some areas of concern in downtown Olympia.

- PBDEs are a known issue in the Nisqually, especially for steelhead. It has been detected in the Mashel and we are working on tracing it to sources. Not seen in Yelm so far, but may become an issue as volume increases. – Cody will ask and follow up about taking PBDE contamination into consideration with the design of the new facility.
- If money were no object, what would be the ideal facilities for Yelm’s wastewater treatment? – The biodryer for biosolids is a significant investment and an important goal for the program. The proposal includes a septage receiving station to limit the amount of time and distance septage is on the road. Cody’s goal is to manage upgrades without increasing burden on residents and ratepayers.
- What is the current status of Yelm’s water right application? –It is in review with Ecology. Hopefully, no news is good news.
- Sheila Wilson was Cody’s former science teacher at Yelm Middle School - a full circle moment!

#### **4. Graduate Yelm**

*Andrew Kollar, Yelm Community Schools Community Relations Coordinator*

Yelm Community Schools (YCS) has a goal of 100% graduation, as well as graduation readiness, meaning students are prepared for life and career paths after high school. This graduation readiness campaign was launched in 2018, corresponding with an increase in graduation rates from mid-80% range to low 90% range. The 2020 graduation rate was 96%, although this figure was higher than usual across the state due to the pandemic. Graduate Yelm focuses on the remaining 4% of students who aren’t graduating. Barriers to graduation are different for each student, and understanding their goals requires listening to their needs. As part of the graduation efforts, the district is working with middle schools to offer classes that give high school credit, so students can enter high school with some credits already achieved, and with high schools to help students graduate with college credit.

Community partnerships are a key part of this effort. Partners can provide students with real-world experiences and professional development opportunities as well as models for possible post-graduation career paths. Partners are expected to share their educational and professional paths with students and encourage them to plan for their own goals “when you graduate,” not “if you graduate”) and a lifelong approach to education. Before the pandemic, partners would conduct mock job interviews at a “Reality Fair,” which teaches students about jobs and budgeting. This year, partners (including NREP) have visited Zoom classes for Q&A with students about their career paths. Other activities with partners have included a pop-up blood drive with Bloodworks NW and other partners, a low-cost mobile dental clinic with the Acora Foundation, and support for the Dollars for Scholars scholarship program from the Yelm Prairie Christian Center. Graduate Yelm produces a newsletter for partners with updates about students and partner activities, as a way to build relationships between local students and community leaders. Graduate Yelm’s goal is to grow to 200 network partners. If NRC members are interested in becoming a partner, please contact Andrew.

#### YCS Return to School Timeline:

Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students returned to hybrid in-person and distance learning on January 28. 3-5<sup>th</sup> grades returned on February 18. The district is targeting March 1 for middle school and March 15 for high school. Teachers and students have both been excited to be back and hybrid learning has been going well.

#### *Discussion:*

- Is the Nisqually Tribe a partner? – Yes. The Tribe has offered great guest speakers for classes, which gives kids something to remember. Speakers have discussed habitat restoration and tribal housing initiative, which have been of good interest for students.
- How can the NRC support Graduate Yelm? – Provide contact information to Andrew ([andrew\\_kollar@yycs.wednet.edu](mailto:andrew_kollar@yycs.wednet.edu)) if you're interested in talking with individual students, classes, or taking part in other opportunities.
- Does the district support apprenticeship programs for students interested in trades? – These activities were difficult last year due to COVID, but there are some volunteer learning opportunities offered by partners, including a City Hall internship, volunteering with Rotary on food distribution, etc. Hope to bring those back in spring/summer 2021.

### **5. For the Good of the Order**

Daniel Hull advised the Council that WDFW is preparing to redevelop the Luhr Landing boat launch/access point, which has long needed updating. Construction will impact Nisqually Reach Nature Center (NRNC) programs as well as community access. NRNC has sent a letter to WDFW regarding communication and seeking clarification about timelines and access so they can plan around the construction (including for a current grant to conduct a summer program with Tribal youth). In addition, pulling the pilings from the defunct pier will impact the aquarium pump system at the NRNC, and the NRC hopes to be able to work with WDFW on an interim solution. Daniel asked the NRC to support the request for clear communication from WDFW. Darrin Masters has reached out to the project manager at WDFW and will follow up with the NRNC shortly. The NRC invited Daniel and WDFW to present an update on this project and the NRNC's current programs at a meeting in the near future.

The Yelm Prairie Line Trail development is included in the project list for funding through RCO's Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, but will not receive funding this year if the Legislature reduces the WWRP funding from the Governor's request level. People interested in seeing this project advance can contact their legislators and ask for full funding for the WWRP.

Pierce and Thurston Conservation Districts are both having board elections. Residents must contact their CD to request a ballot directly. Jeanette Dorner is a PCD board member since 2009 and is up for reelection this year. The State Conservation Commission passed a rule change last year requiring districts to hold elections every year, whether or not there is a contested race.

**Pierce:** <https://pierced.org/573/How-to-Vote-in-District-Elections>

Ballot request deadline: March 3

Ballot return deadline: March 24

**Thurston:** <https://www.thurstoncd.com/about-us/board-member-elections/>

Ballot request deadline: March 11

Ballot Return deadline: March 16

Ashley has signed up for Amazon Smile supporting the Nisqually River Foundation (NLT and other nonprofits are also open). It is an easy way to support our local nonprofits.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:26pm.

*Next meeting: Friday, February 19, 2021*

*Online*