



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

Attendees:

NRC Members:

Gary Edwards – Thurston County
Dani Madrone – City of Olympia

Darrin Masters – WDFW
David Troutt, chair – Nisqually Indian Tribe

CAC Members:

Phyllis Farrell
Paula Holroyde

Martin McCallum
Lois Ward

Guests:

Roger Andrascik – NLT/NSS
Jesse Barham – City of Olympia
Jeff Barney – Pierce County
Bradley Beach – Nisqually THPO
Chris Ellings – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Lloyd Fetterly – NLT/NSS
Cathy Hamilton-Wissmer - JBLM
Daniel Hull – NRNC
Andrew Kollar – Yelm Community Schools
Darric Lowry - WDFW
Yolanda Markle
Linda Murtfeldt

Kathleen Mix – NLT
Talha Nafie – WDFW
Mike Noone – Ecology
Mike Polodna – WDFW
Julie Rector – City of Lacey
April Roe – NRNC
Eric Rosane – Nisqually Valley News
Brian Scott – NRNC
Shannon Shula – Thurston County
Ashley Von Essen – Nisqually Indian Tribe
Jeff Zahir

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 9:02am. 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 on March 9. Ed updated on Nisqually Land Trust acquisitions and Sequelitchew Creek restoration. Members discussed Yelm water rights and streamflow issues. They would like to have Cody Colt from Yelm Public Works give another briefing about Yelm stormwater. Howard gave updates on Alder Lake.

Chair Report – David Troutt

David is contributing to I-5 project briefings for state legislators, US senators, and the Washington State Transportation Commission. The proposal to elevate the freeway to allow natural processes in the estuary without risk to infrastructure has been a vision for 15 years and is finally gaining momentum. An editorial in The Olympian in January has helped raise awareness with lawmakers. David has also met with legislators regarding funding for the state community forest program. The Nisqually project is time-sensitive, and risks not happening if funding is not secured this year.

Staff report – Emily McCartan

The update to the Nisqually Watershed Stewardship Plan is finalized and available online at <https://nisquallyriver.org/resources/nwsp/>. Revisions to the website are in progress to bring it up to date with the NWSP. The letter which the NRC approved in February, recommending local on-site studies of existing RAP piles, was sent to the Thurston Board of County Commissioners and Pierce County Council, and cc'd to Ecology, Olympia, Lacey, and researchers. The Nisqually Tribe is pursuing a pilot project to filter runoff in Ohop for 6PPD-quinone. Emily has accepted a position as the communications manager at Long Live the Kings. Next month will be her last meeting as staff to the River Council.

Advisory Committee Reports:

Thurston County Subarea Plan – Shannon Shula

The Nisqually Subarea Plan update is on hold till next year. Thurston Conservation Futures funding applications are open.

Nisqually Land Trust – Jeanette Dorner

NLT is working on a conservation easement on shoreline in the Nisqually Reach, including pocket estuary habitat. The location will be announced when the deal is final. An acquisition in the Busy Wild is making progress with partners at Ecology. NLT is sending a letter of support for the Tribe's Ohop runoff pilot to treat tire dust before it enters the creek. The Land Steward position is posted. This year's annual Land Camp conference is virtual this year, meaning that it will be open for public attendance. Jeanette will share registration information. Save the Date for NLT's virtual auction on June 5.

Nisqually River Education Project – Sheila Wilson

Winter Water Quality Monitoring take-home kits with Secchi disks and a DIY enviroscape model were distributed to 7 teachers and 132 students. Teachers have shared pictures of students using the materials. Student GREEN Congress was held virtually this week with 565 students. A Storymap compared two sites, in Nisqually and Deschutes, and helped students discuss land use and water quality relationship. Evergreen Professor Carri LeRoy and other partners gave a wide variety of workshops online. NREP has submitted 5 new grants in the last month and a half, and will be presenting on watershed education at the Salmon Recovery Conference in April. Staff are working with North Thurston Public Schools on field STEM experiences for all 4th and 5th graders, with water quality monitoring for 5th grade and a 4th grade salmon life cycle experience in partnership with the Nisqually Tribe.

Nisqually River Foundation and Nisqually Community Forest – Justin Hall

The NRF is drafting a grant agreement with Ecology for its streamflow grant to study and develop projects in Muck Creek. The NRF board has added four new members – James (Junior) Slape, Maia Bellon, Karen Andrascik, and Karen Fraser. The NRC coordinator position will be posted soon – please share with potential candidates. Justin is part of the Billy Frank Jr. Statuary Hall coalition. The bill passed in the House (92-3) and had a hearing in the Senate this week. It has very strong bipartisan support and people who knew Billy have spoken eloquently about his life and legacy. If passed, the coalition will move to fundraising. Justin attended the Pierce County hearing regarding the Park Junction resort permit, which is set to expire after 26 years (including several renewals). County staff have indicated the outcome could go either way, and will likely go to higher courts. Construction equipment at the site in recent weeks is a last-minute attempt to start test wetland construction, required under the expiring permit.

The Community Forest Board met this month and reviewed annual work plan. Justin is participating in legislative outreach for the state community forest acquisition funding program, in coordination with the NW Community Forest Coalition and Association of Land Trusts.

Salmon Recovery Program – Chris Ellings

Monitoring is now ongoing for the pilot herring habitat supplementation project. The Tribe set out Christmas trees and cedar boughs in the nearshore area around the Nisqually Delta, historical herring spawning is believed to have occurred, based on discussion with Nisqually elders who used this technique to harvest roe. Nearshore habitat has been damaged from loss of eelgrass/kelp beds, as well as sediment cutoff from BNR rail line for the last 100 years. South Sound has never been studied for herring usage in 20 years of research, although gravid females have been observed. The goal of this project is to study herring presence and see if use of trees and boughs can boost their spawning grounds, while working on long-term restoration of natural shoreline functions. Roe has been seen on the tree boughs, but no herring identified yet. This could become a long-term community science effort – NRNC would be interested in helping connect with community members in the Nisqually Aquatic Reserve, including on Anderson Island. Herring are a keystone species for Salish Sea. A healthy herring population is a preferred prey for harbor seals, which otherwise prey heavily on juvenile steelhead, so boosting herring and other forage fish increases steelhead survival.

3. Salmon Recovery Funding Board Project List

Ashley Von Essen, Lead Entity Coordinator

SRFB funding is allocated by the State annually through Lead Entities for salmon recovery projects. This is a “small” year (no Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration funds).

Salmon Recovery Funding Board Estimated Allocation for Nisqually: **\$375,000**

Total Project List Grant Request: **\$416,778**

Nisqually River McKenna Reach Protection 2021

- HWS# 11-MAINSTEM-1051, PRISM# 21-1030
- Sponsor: Nisqually Land Trust

- Grant Request: **\$74,642**
- Match: \$13,200
- The Land Trust proposes to pursue permanent protection of 0.26 mile of Nisqually River shoreline along the Pierce County side of the McKenna Reach. This project will protect approximately 12 acres including the river shoreline and forested bluff face. NLT site visit observed huge old-growth trees.

Nisqually Floodplain Small Lots Acquisition 2021

- HWS# 11-MAINSTEM-1052, PRISM# 21-1031
- Sponsor: Nisqually Land Trust
- Grant Request: **\$44,136**
- Match: \$7,800
- The Land Trust proposes to work with willing landowners to pursue permanent protection of up to 12 properties, totaling 36 acres, in the Nisqually River floodplain. This includes a property that was acquired by the Land Trust in 2020, under a waiver of retroactivity. This project's geographic envelope encompass a group of small, platted lots along the Middle Reach of the Nisqually River. Where these properties are undeveloped, permanent protection will eliminate future shoreline, riparian, and floodplain impacts from development. It will make it easier to continue acquiring property in this area if opportunities arise later.

Lower Ohop Protection 2021

- HWS# 11-OHOP-1029, PRISM# 21-1029
- Sponsor: Nisqually Land Trust
- Amount Requested from SRFB: **\$130,000**
- Match: \$22,950
- In preparation for the next phase of the Lower Ohop Creek Restoration Project, the Land Trust proposes to pursue permanent protection of properties throughout the portion of the Lower Ohop Creek Restoration project envelope where restoration activities have not yet taken place. This project is designed to provide an opportunity for acquisition of up to five properties in the project area, but at a minimum will include acquisition of the two properties described below.
 - Property A includes 0.2 mile of Ohop Creek shoreline, and approximately 10 acres of floodplain in the Lower Ohop Creek Restoration area.
 - Property B includes 0.1 mile of Ohop Creek shoreline, and approximately 1.4 acres of floodplain in the Lower Ohop Creek Restoration area.

Mashel River Design and Assessment RM 0.0-3.0

- HWS# 11-MASHEL-1021, PRISM# 21-1032
- Sponsor: South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group
- Amount Requested from SRFB: **\$168,000**
- Match: \$0 (short-term design project)

- This proposal is for a design planning grant to include a design for restoration sites near the mouth of the Mashel River, coupled with an assessment of in-stream conditions and wood loading within the lower three miles of the Mashel River. The restoration design will focus on two adjacent work areas where bridge and road infrastructure will be removed to restore fluvial processes, connect the river with the floodplain near the Nisqually confluence, and improve salmon habitat within the river.
 - First work area is at the end of a gravel road terminating at the confluence of the Nisqually River and the left bank of the Mashel River (mouth of the Mashel). This site is associated with an inactive bridge which formerly spanned the Nisqually River.
 - The second work area is located approximately 0.2 mile upstream from the mouth of the Mashel at a current bridge crossing. Proposed actions at this site include removal of the bridge, abutments, and bank armoring.
 - NIT has been working with State Parks and Pack Forest (the landowners) and they are on board.

Virtual site visits were held on February 24 and SRFB review panel comments are due in early April. The final ranked list will be submitted to the NRC in July and to RCO in August. Funding should be approved in September. Ashley requested the NRC's approval for the project list.

Discussion:

No initial red flags from the SRFB review panel. They have commented over several years that they are reluctant to purchase structures and upland parcels, and the NLT has responded well by drawing parcels focused on floodplains and shoreline. The panel requested more information on several acquisitions. The Tribe and others have concerns about the new "zero-rise" permitting mandate, which stipulates that restoration projects must not cause any increase in floodwaters. It is a significant burden that threatens to slow down the pace of restoration significantly. Restoration work sometimes needs to encourage more flood frequency. This challenge will need to be addressed regionally with agencies and the Governor's office. Recovery projects have gotten expedited permit review, but this is a significant driver of cost and time for projects.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the list as presented. The motion was adopted without amendment.

Ashley announced that the Yil Me Hu magazine is now being printed and will be coming to your mailboxes soon.

4. Luhr Beach Construction Project and Nisqually Reach Nature Center

Daniel Hull, Nisqually Reach Nature Center

The NRNC has had to adapt its in-person activities significantly in 2020. Partnerships have stayed strong. NRNC is a partner in the CLAMSS (Climate Literacy, Action, and Monitoring in South Sound), which usually brings students to do activities on the beach and at the

shellfish company. This year, NRNC developed online curriculum related to those activities, as well as for the general public, including:

- Free family field trips – borrow a marine science kit for small family groups to do crab and benthic surveys at Luhr Beach.
- Treasure the Adventure Hunt – Borrow a map and with a puzzle to solve at several different parks. 51 families participated and the model is being adopted by other local partners.
- Community monitoring of Pigeon Guillemot and forage fish – 8 years of volunteer-led community science data collection. Many volunteers have been with the program for a long time and are able to train others. Lab work for sampling forage fish data was restricted this year due to the pandemic, but were able to expand the sampling area and collect some data. NRNC purchased microscopes for volunteers to do lab work at home. Two years ago, added community monitoring for larval Dungeness crab via light trapping. 70 samples were collected this year at Zittels Marina, and this year samples are finding Dungeness.

Community engagement and partnerships lead to support for conservation. The Nisqually Reach Aquatic Reserve expansion is slowly continuing to move forward. Volunteers have contributed 5651 hours in 2020. Most volunteer time is in education and community monitoring programs, with a the rest in behind-the-scenes support activities like fundraising. Fundraising success has enabled the NRNC to make April Roe and Terence Lee full-time employees.

What's next for 2021:

- Needed improvements to the Luhr Beach boat launch, in process with WDFW.
- Summer camps are planned this year, including one specifically for Nisqually Tribal Youth via a grant from the Nisqually Charitable funds.
- Sharing stories with the community

Luhr's Landing Access Redevelopment Project

Talha Nafie – WDFW project manager

This project will make needed improvements to the Luhr Beach landing water access site:

- Boat launch ramp – erosion control with an articulated concrete mat.
- Bank stabilization – soil lift and large woody debris to maintain shorelines and encourage plant growth and forage fish habitat.
- Parking areas – grading, paving and painting, 3 ADA-compliant spaces to be added.
- Stormwater catch basins and biofilter for pollution reduction on both sides of project.
- Vault toilet – replace existing facility with ADA-compliant stall.
- ADA-compliant accessible platform for ramp.
- Eelgrass and fish habitat improvement by removal of existing pier and repositioning of concrete bulkheads.

Permit Status: Hydraulic project approval (HPA), Army Corps, and Shoreline, Cultural resources, and on-site septic permits have been received. Thurston County stormwater permit is under review now.

Construction Schedule: Developed based on similar projects, with 8-10 weeks of work expected. WDFW is working with NRNC and other stakeholders to accommodate existing activities as much as possible. The project may take longer due to flexibility for partner activities. Final schedule will be developed after final permits are received and discussion with NRNC is finalized.

Coordination and Communication: Discussion with NRNC has been ongoing. Outreach to Tribes is planned to avoid conflict with events and activities. Outreach to general public will take place via signs prior to construction. Contact Talha (Talha.nafie@dfw.wa.gov), 360-764-0400 with questions any time.

Discussion:

- With new concerns about tire dust, would it be possible to install the compost biofilters being tested elsewhere in Nisqually? – WDFW project managers are not familiar with this specific issue. The project design is finalized and would be difficult to add more features this late in the process, especially if it will require new permits. The planned stormwater treatment is bioswale. Members summarized research presented by UW and WSU on 6PPD-quinone, and Nisqually pilot projects to treat for that chemical and prevent it getting into waters where it is highly lethal to coho at small concentrations. Since this site is near an educational center, it could be a good opportunity to both install new treatment and educate the public about the issue. May be able to add an enhancement after the project if it doesn't require new permitting and scheduling. WDFW will connect with the Tribe and Jen McIntyre at WSU to discuss options without slowing down the project. The Tribe's pilot bioretention strategy may work within existing bioswale design. Bioswales can be effective and should not require major changes or increased costs. Maintenance is key. Will schedule a meeting to follow up later.
- NRNC can provide education and interpretive outreach about several aspects of this project design to encourage people to think about ecologically sustainable design – soft armoring, wood rather than concrete bulkheads, bioswales to protect fish from runoff.
- NRNC shared a letter with the NRC last meeting with some concerns about scheduling and impacts. WDFW has been responsive and is in communication with NRNC about working through the concerns. WDFW is working with NRNC to balance the project requirements (RCO-funded with specific needs) with NRNC summer activities. Timing window is small for doing in-water work is over the summer, which is at the peak of NRNC activities. There will be some impacts but will try to spread them out as much as possible.

5. Exploring the Nisqually Watershed: Virtual Tour with Nearpod

Maya Nabipoor, NREP AmeriCorps, and April Roe, NRNC

This winter, NREP has worked with the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge and Nisqually Reach Nature Center to develop an interactive virtual tour of the Nisqually Watershed. The online Nearpod platform allows both video and interactive experiences for

students. The goal was to inspire students with a sense of awe and exploration. Publicity to schools began this week, and after 2 days of outreach, have requests for almost 400 students to participate. North Thurston sees these fitting well into 4th grade field STEM experiences for next fall, so they will extend past COVID and be a good preparatory tool for classes before going out on field experiences.

Maya shared an introductory video of a Google Earth flyover of the Nisqually watershed. There are three core lessons, covering the Estuary, Wetlands, and Forests, Salmon, and Mount Rainier. The design of this project came from a review of current education projects and the realization that they were missing a sense of the watershed as a whole. Staff wanted students to feel excited and realize how amazing the Nisqually watershed is. The style is fun and engaging, based on classic science education videos: Bill Nye, Discovery Channel, silly costumes, etc. All the video footage in the project was filmed by Maya, April, and Davy Clark from the Refuge, in places they are excited about from Mount Rainier to Puget Sound. Members spent time exploring the unit on forests and salmon.

Nearpod is limited to sessions with a unique code, so teachers have to request a code for their class. Please share the preview links and have teachers get in touch with NREP if they are interested in participating with their classes: <https://nrep.nisquallyriver.org/for-teachers/exploring-the-nisqually-watershed/>

Discussion:

Outstanding work. It takes a huge amount of time to create this kind of online content. This was an incredible effort by Maya, April, and Davy, and the result is wonderful. The parts in salmon and orca costumes were filmed over two days. Many hours to fill in footage and voiceover as the project concluded. They had to work filming around the COVID spikes in fall and winter. As a transplant to Washington, this was a beautiful experience. Many people who live here their whole lives don't explore the natural world around them, and this could be a great way for kids to share their excitement with parents.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00pm.

*Next meeting: Friday, April 16, 2021
Online*