



Meeting Minutes
Nisqually River Council Meeting
June 18, 2021
Online Meeting

Attendees

NRC Members:

Roger Andrascik - NLT Board Member
Daniel Calvert - JBLM Sentinel Landscape Partnership
Glynnis Nakai - BFJNNWR

Terry Kaminski - Yelm City Council
Jesse Barham - City of Olympia
Julie Rector - City of Lacey
Larry Stickney - Pierce County Council

CAC:

Phyllis Farrell
Howard Glastetter
Yolanda Markle

Yanah G Cook
Paula Holroyde
Lois Ward

Guests:

Ashley Von Essen - NIT
Warren Bergh - NLT Volunteer
Jeff Zahir
Timothy Ransom
Suzanne Kline - Citizens for Clean Black Lake
Daniel Hull - NRNC

Nettsie Bullchild - NIT
Etsuko Reistroffer
Lloyd Fetterly
Christina Rohila - Pierce County
Christopher Ellings - NIT
Lynda Mapes - Seattle Times
George Walter - NIT

Staff:

Justin Hall - NRF
Joanne Park - NRF
Maya Nabipoor - NREP

Sheila Wilson - NREP
Julia Fregonara - NREP
Jeanette Dorner - NLT

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

Phyllis called the meeting to order at 9:02am. There was a correction in the meeting minutes to correct Wa He Lut tribe to Wa He Lut community as it is a school and not an Indian tribe. Meeting minutes from the May NRC meeting were approved and the meeting agenda was approved. Introductions were made.

2. Committee Reports and Updates

Advisory Committee Reports:

CAC Report - Phyllis Farrell

The CAC meeting did not happen this month so there was not much to report. Howard had an update about the RAP issue. It turns out they had about 67,000 cubic yards of asphalt that has been exposed to weather for several years. The hearing examiner is spending a lot of time making a decision about this. Howard notified Lacey Water that they should check a nearby well for chemicals that are leaking from the pile. He received an email from Ecology that they will have a biosolids meeting on June 22nd and June 24th - both meetings are open for public comment. Many biosolids are not adequately tested and it has some harmful effects on farmlands, animals, and food. CAC has advocated for the Department of Ecology to make changes against the new 5-year permit. There is a movie that did a great job telling the story about the Dupont Company poisoning citizens of a town in West Virginia by Dupont's Teflon production plant called "Dark Waters". This documentary takes a look at what happens when a business looks the other way rather than address the issues with best management practices. It was recommended to watch this movie to learn more. The next CAC meeting will have updates from Glynnis and Ashley.

Staff Report - Joanne Park

Joanne did not have a lot to report as she is still catching up on reviewing projects around the Nisqually Watershed. The learning process has been slow as she has been working from home and unable to interact with someone in-person on a daily basis. She is hopeful to get up to speed soon!

Allied Program Reports:

Nisqually Land Trust - Jeanette Dorner

An expression of thanks went out to everyone who participated in the Conservation Celebration and Auction this year. Billy Frank and Hanford McCloud joined this event as well. The event was recorded and will be posted on Youtube for anyone who missed it. Fundraising goals were surprised, which set a new fundraising record. There was a lot of support from so many and NLT is grateful for all those who participated in the event.

Shortly after this event, NLT closed on another six acres of property just a couple days after the auction. The property is out on Johnson Point called Hogum Bay. They purchased an adjoining parcel that contains some of the wetlands that feed into the pocket estuary into Hogum Bay. They are excited to be able to protect and steward that piece of property. The juvenile salmon leaving the main estuary in the river now have a pocket estuary to rest and feed, which is really valuable. This makes a huge difference for salmon as they head out of Puget Sound. A question was raised about whether or not the wetlands are part of the shoreline. They are part of the shoreline.

There is a great group of volunteers that regularly participate in work parties where they prepare sites for big projects like removing invasive species like blackberries. In the past,

volunteers didn't tend to show up on Saturdays. Wednesdays seem to be the day that works best for work parties. For more information, you can go to their website and look at their calendar for upcoming events. The meeting site varies as it depends on the project and shifts typically take place in the morning from 9am-12pm. You can also email their volunteer coordinator for more information.

NREP - Sheila Wilson

Julia and Maya finished student lessons in a very strong way. They came up with a very creative lesson idea by doing a live oyster dissection for over 500 students. More than 1200 students were reached and many teachers returned because they enjoyed the lesson so much. Big shout out to Julia and Maya to be able to reach so many students given the circumstances.

Currently, they are planning for Summer Institute coming up June 28-30. This program will start at the BFJNNWR and then transition to NRNC. The second day will be at the Nisqually Community Garden, where participants will learn from tribal members about tribal history. There will also be learning about the prairies and many other activities. The Summer Institute has already filled up with 32 teachers.

A word cloud was also shared that was generated from feedback from teachers about their retreat experience. The biggest words that were shown were inspiring and connecting - there were a lot of positive words associated with the experience.

There was a great NCLI event. There were 14 students that showed up for the horseback riding clinic and although students were timid at first, they really overcame their fear and enjoyed the program. The next program with that grant is on June 27th for a garden and medicine making workshop.

There was a field trip with Salish Middle School. One student said it was their first time going to a beach in Puget Sound and their first time looking through a microscope. This student was also excited about career opportunities related to this programming.

NREP received a lot of grants this year. John Montrose is retiring from Wa He Lut Indian School and is interested in joining the NRC.

They have also been awarded two Americorps positions and are looking to hire for these positions to help with education programming for the 2021-2022 term. If anyone knows of someone who would be interested, you can find more information on the website.

Nisqually River Foundation - Justin Hall

In addition to all the grants NREP received, the Rose Foundation grant was also received. There is a fund for small grants to be used in the Nisqually Watershed and NRF was successful in receiving another \$29k. This will be used towards water quality monitoring that will be done with students through NREP programs.

The planning committee for the upcoming Watershed Festival has been deciding whether or not to move forward with an in-person event or a virtual event this year. The planning process for the event has started but they are still working through this decision.

A final report has been created on the impacts of the restoration at BFJNNWR. NRF is helping coordinate it and producing the Glossy, which will be about 10-20 pages so the public has the opportunity to learn what happened there and what changes took place through the restoration work. Once that is done, there will be an online webinar much like how it has been done in the past as they are expecting a lot of interest in this information.

As NRF and many other groups are moving towards a more hybrid meeting style, they purchased some Owl Cameras that will be placed in the conference room. These work well for meetings to take place in-person while allowing people to attend from home and online.

Last NRC meeting, there was discussion of an artist who installs large wooden trolls. Justin spoke to the artist and looked throughout the Nisqually Watershed to see what site would be a good site for the artwork.

Community Forest - Justin Hall

They presented at the Pacific Land Trust Annual Conference and there was a panel about Nisqually Community Forest. The panel discussed why and how they were created as well as future plans. They are working this summer to do some more in -depth planning for the Community Forest. They are also working on inventory to identify the amount of carbon they have. There was a question about field trips around August or September. They are working on this but have not scheduled anything yet.

Salmon Recovery Program - Ashley Von Essen

Ashley added to the conversation about the Watershed Festival and shared about the poster contest. She thanked Julia for her hard work in advertising for the contest. They finished judging the posters and chose the big orca picture that will look good for marketing.

There is a public database owned and operated by RCO which contains all the salmon recovery projects that are planned and completed. They are working on a pilot program to put in all the streamflow restoration projects.

The ongoing grant round was also discussed. This year is a surfboard year, which means it is a small funding year. About \$40 million was appropriated and it is a little bit higher than they are normally used to receiving. The theme is to benefit resident orcas. They will be receiving an extra \$45k. At this point, all of the projects will be receiving some money but they are a little short. The working group will be discussing these projects and there will be some good updates for the next meeting.

There was a picture sent of the poster contest winner and it was a beautiful and colorful picture of an orca jumping out of the water with a sunset in the background. Sheila was able to share as Davey sent the picture over to her. There were submissions from the Wa He Lut for the first time ever. There were some digital submissions as well as mail-in submissions. Jeanette's daughter won 1st place for the 6th grade contest.

3. Americorps Year in Review

Maya Nabipoor, NREP Americorps Member

Maya has been the Americorps member for NREP for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 service terms. This is her last meeting as her last day will be July 15th, which is the day before the next NRC meeting. It is a tradition to do a year in review and discuss what the Americorps service has provided for her.

She spoke about the programs she was heavily involved in. The first program discussed is the water quality monitoring program, which was mostly done virtually this past year. This program reached 722 students. It involved sending water quality test kits home to students that included nitrate and pH test strips to test water at home. This was a successful way to engage students in water quality.

The next program discussed was the Tree Planting program. They were unable to run this program in the typical field trip format so they partnered with NLT to do this virtually.

Additionally, students usually participate in salmon tossing, where they throw frozen salmon carcasses into the Nisqually Watershed. However, because they were not able to teach in-person, they ran live demonstrations for salmon dissections instead. They reached 462 students who virtually dissected Coho salmon live over zoom. Students were really engaged in learning about salmon anatomy and life cycle.

A particular photo was pointed out to share that a parent sent NREP a photo of two sisters enjoying a lesson together. Another program used Enviroscape kits that were sent home to 164 students to make and model their own watershed. This activity gave students an opportunity to learn about pollution and surface water runoff.

Student GREEN Congress was a success as 74 students from NREP joined to talk about water quality data and compare their data with each other. They participated in a variety of workshops engaging in fun activities from home. A video was shared that stitched together videos of students sharing what actions they think should be taken to improve water quality. Students recorded themselves talking about what actions they would take to live in a healthier watershed. It was a great way to display how kids learned about their watershed.

Benthic macroinvertebrate lessons reached 122 students. Stream bugs were cast in resin, then discussed over zoom using a dichotomous key to identify them. Oyster dissections were also demonstrated live over zoom with 502 students. To see the effects of ocean acidification on shells, students were sent a 2-week experiment that included vinegar and shell pieces. Students put shell pieces in vinegar and observed the effects of an acidic environment on shells over time.

In total, 2,236 students were contacted and 1,274 individual students were reached which are really great numbers.

In partnership with BFJNNWR and NRNC, there were virtual lessons developed to explore the Nisqually Watershed to inspire awe at the natural beauty that exists here. They reached 1,289 students in 10 districts with these series of lessons. Many of these students were students that had not connected with before.

In order to gauge impact, Americorps requires a form to see the impact of their work. A stewardship pledge was put together for students to take to see the impact of their lessons. This pledge also asked students to write a short explanation of what changes they can make in their own personal life. It was challenging to get students to take this pledge but there were a few that stood out to Maya. She shared some inspiring highlights. One student specifically mentioned salmon, which is valuable as the main objective of many of their lessons is for students to understand the importance of salmon in the watershed. Another student stated they were considering pursuing this particular field for a career. Another student mentioned they should be educating others like their parents to make sure they can still make a positive impact on the planet. One of the major goals in their programming is for students to invest in the resources they are asking them to protect as many of them recreate within the Nisqually Watershed. One student mentioned that they will be visiting a natural resource and be committed to protecting it while another student mentioned that they will advocate for animals and people who are unable to speak for themselves. It was impressive to see how these lessons expanded the worldview of these students and look at the bigger picture.

Maya reflected on her impact as an Americorps member and thanked everyone for the opportunity to engage students in some inspiring work. NRNC and other members thanked Maya for her work and wished her the best. The quantification of the number of kids that were touched were really impressive and shows the impact of her work. There was a question about the locations of where all these students were reached. There was a suggestion that it would be helpful to show a map showing the geographical reach of these students as well as percentages to show the greater impact of NREP.

4. Orcas: Shared Water, Shared Home

Lynda Mapes, Seattle Times

Lynda introduced herself. She is the environmental reporter for the Seattle Times and she values the work that groups like NRC does. She thanked everyone for allowing her to present. A few years ago, there was a story about J35, also known as Tahlequah, who lost a calf and was mourning it for several weeks. Scientists are aware that orcas are incredibly intelligent. When they lose a family member, they grieve for them. Tahlequah lost her calf and would not let go of her calf for more than 17 days. There were more than 6 million people reading about this story around the world. The Seattle Times decided this was something they really wanted to learn more about. They wanted to know why a top predator that had been in our waters for thousands of years was having trouble reproducing. Tahlequah's calf was the first calf that had been born in 3 years and it did not survive. This story launched a series about the extinction

crisis of orcas in The Seattle Times, which then grew into a book with some beautiful photography about the southern residents and the salmon they depend on. It was copublished on June 1st with The Seattle Times and Braided River.

[The presentation started recording at this point due to some technical difficulties at the beginning]

Signed books can be ordered from Elliot Bay Books by writing a comment at the bottom asking for a signed book. If you live in Olympia, you can go to Browser's Books. They have lots of copies in stock. If you want to buy one, make sure you purchase one soon as they are selling out.

Lynda shared what this story was like for her to cover. A video was played showing a pod of orcas traveling along the west side of San Juan Island; this is J-pod. This is Tahlequah with her family and she is carrying her calf. It was mentioned that there is tension in the voices of the biologists on the boat. They were watching Tahlequah but were also looking for a young orca (J50) who was only about 3 years old and starving to death. People were wondering what is going on with these families and why is there such a state of crisis with the southern residents. This family was where the story really started for her. She also shared what it was like for her on the boat at the Center for Whale Research. Another video was played of herself describing the sad site of watching Tahlequah carry her calf slowly on her rostrum; it looked like a procession. Southern resident orcas have been in our waters for 10,000 years so these animals are part of a society of great antiquity. Some people of the Lummi nation have described to Lynda as knowing their song and that they have been families together and have been in this place since the ice melted. They and other Coast Salish people regard the southern resident orcas as "Qw'e lh'ol mechen" – the people who live under the sea. There is a deep attachment and connection to these whales, these salmon, and these places that we all call home today.

Their photographer, Steve Wrangler, spent a lot of time capturing some incredible photos. A photo was shown of the photograph that ended up being the poster for this entire series and the cover for the book. It took him all day for one frame.

The photo was a reminder that Tahlequah was a mother who happened to be a whale. It reminded everyone in the region that these are families with deep attachments and the grieving brought that home for everyone. There was a sense of surprise with this story. There was a photo displayed of an orca jumping out of the water in front of Mt. Baker. Everything looks so pristine and beautiful. You look at these incredible photos and ask how could there be anything wrong?

However, these orcas are facing many threats. These southern residents have learned over many generations where to fish for salmon. Today, these fish runs have diminished in numbers, diversity, and size. This means they have to work harder for their food. If they become hungry, they burn their fat, which is where toxins are stored such as legacy chemicals. They need to eat every day to be in top body condition to reproduce. The second threat to them is hunger itself because then these toxins release into their blood. The third threat is

sound. They have to be able to hear the bounce back from their sonar to be able to hunt for salmon to determine if it's going to be a big juicy salmon to eat. It is a lot of effort for the whales. These sounds can be disturbed by a boat, ferry, or kayak. These three threats are very much intertwined.

Their foraging patterns are even changing because of the lack of fish. These southern resident orcas that work the west side of San Juan Island have learned over the years to get fish up against the rock wall, going up and down in a pattern called the "San Juan Shuffle". However, this is changing. They have not been seen recently in the San Juan Islands and are not showing up until much later in the summer now. Scientists are now hearing them on the outer coast. It seems they are changing their migration patterns to follow the fish. They are showing us what we need to know about how these fish are doing and how we are doing. Seattle Times decided to follow these orcas to understand the threats to their survival.

They first started where orcas were thriving and healthy by looking at the northern residents in BC. They are the same type of orca but live in a different foraging range. The big difference with them is they are doing well. Their numbers are continuing to increase and they have plenty of babies. There are so many of them that they are starting to compete with each other. They treated these orcas as a control group and figured out what they were doing right.

There are also transient orcas, which is a different type of orca because of their diet. These orcas eat marine mammals and do not eat fish. Another type of orca is the offshore orcas, which scientists know the least about. They think they might eat sharks because their teeth get worn down from the shark skin. One of the real shocks about being up north was just how many orcas they saw. They saw them when they were not even looking for them and saw them almost everywhere they went. It was a great comparison to southern resident orcas who they spent so much time looking for. These apex predators are supposed to be there so it shows that BC had a very healthy population, which showed what normal looked like.

Paul Spong, the founder of OrcaLab, has been interested in the acoustic life of these whales. He uses underwater microphones to study behaviors when they are traveling or feeding nearby. He was one of the first to understand the unique intelligence of these whales. Decades ago, he had worked with a captive whale at the Vancouver Aquarium named Skana. He had this idea that he would do some sound experiments with her around the corner where she could not see him. As he worked with her, he learned that she was the one running these experiments because she was calling all the shots. That is where he noticed the incredible intelligence of these animals. Orcas are among the most intelligent mammals on earth as they are able to empathize and communicate with each other.

Northern residents do not just live in another place; they live in another world. There was a picture of a very large tree that you rarely see in Washington state. Seeing trees this large used to be much more common. When you lost forests, you lose tree cover. When you lose tree cover, you lose all the beautiful insect rain going into the water that feeds the fish. You lose shade, the coolness, and the stableness of the banks. If you want salmon, you must protect the trees. All these ecosystems are interconnected.

There was a photo of volunteers at an outpost overlooking the Johnstone Strait. What you are looking at across the water is a reserve. This reserve protects the whales as boats are not allowed here, not even kayaks. It is called the Michael Big Reserve and it is located in an excellent spot with a salmon stream and stones on the beach for orcas to rub their bellies on. This special place is like a spa for them where they can rest and play in peace. We do not have anything like that here for the Southern resident orcas. There has been talk for years about creating a reserve for them possibly in the San Juan Islands, where boats would not be allowed. Unfortunately, this has not been achieved yet. However, for the first time, we have increased the distance that boaters must keep from these whales to a half nautical mile. Additionally, you cannot approach calves or any southern resident orca that appears to be in poor health. The west side of San Juan Islands is now off limits, which is a primary fishing zone for these whales. We are making progress and gradually moving towards protecting the orcas but it will take a lot of enforcement.

After learning about the Northern resident orcas, they returned to Puget Sound to learn about what is going on for the whales right here. There was a photo displayed of Lynda watching some orcas in central Puget Sound near Vashon Island and Commencement Bay. They were out with Brad Hanson from the Northwest Fisheries Science Center with NOAA in Seattle, WA. He collects whale poo in his scat surveys to look for valuable information. They gather the scat in a net, put it in preserved fluid, and analyze it. This analysis tells us what they are eating and where the salmon are coming from to help prioritize conservation work. There is other work that is also done with the scat such as the Center for Conservation Biology at the University of Washington led by Sam Wasser. He is the principal investigator on an ongoing research project by with scientists like Deborah Giles, who uses dogs to help locate scat. They analyze them for hormones to understand the stress levels that these whales are under. These stress levels can be caused by hunger. When whales are nutritionally stressed, they lose their pregnancies. These whales are constantly pregnant but lose their pregnancies due to hunger.

These whales are top predators in the world. There was a picture of teeth shown to show how long and powerful their teeth are. If there are fish out there, they can and will get them. Our job is to ensure that they have the fish that they need. There was some painful history that was shared about the Capture Era. This was a time in our state where anyone could capture whales and sell them for profit. A photo was shown of several people putting their hands on a carved killer whale totem pole by the House of Tears Carvers with the Lummi Nation. Jewell James and other tribal members were blessing this whale carving before it headed to the Miami Seaquarium, where the last remaining southern resident orcas were held captive and still alive from the Capture Era. Although the Capture Era was a dark time for these whales, we learned a lot about them. Historically, orcas were despised because they were thought of as blood thirsty killers. However, as people had the ability to see them up close, we fell in love with them and came to be revered and protected. The capture of whales is now illegal here but is allowed in other areas of the world. We know from research that killer whales are uniquely poorly suited for captivity because they are too intelligent for it. They live in isolation, get bored, and are unable to communicate with their families.

As shown in the picture displayed, the Green River is enclosed by walls and lots of development. When rivers are treated like this, you cannot realistically have a healthy

population of salmon for the orcas. King County and other governmental agencies are making investments on trying to improve the Green River such as setting back levies but it is not enough. Howard Hansen Dam, for example, still sits on the Green River with no fish passage. The very best habitat for salmon is above 50% of the habitat for salmon and the Green River is above the Howard Hansen Dam and the Chinook cannot get there. There needs to be a fish passage.

It is also about the ocean. As climate change continues to intensify, it is affecting the ocean food web and is acidifying the ocean. Herring is an important food source for salmon. Herring need natural beaches to lay eggs. Beaches and shoreline have been hardened and disturbed by development so there are no natural eelgrass beds or spawning areas that allows them to reproduce. There is a saying in Coast Salish country – “no little fish, no big fish, no black fish”. It is all connected. Things have to line up for these animals in order for them to have what they need.

There is still room to be hopeful! There have been five births in the last two years. L25 is still out there with her family - she was born in 1928, which is before any of the dams on the Snake and Columbia river and the intense industrialization in the Puget Sound region. She has had to endure and adapt and has been so resilient in order to feed her family. If she can do it, then we can do it. A picture of California was shown where she was flying into San Francisco, where you can see the amount of development around the waters. This picture was taken as a time capsule because Puget Sound is heading in a very similar direction. Salmon have thrived everywhere they have gone. First, in Europe, then on the East Coast then in California. They are disappearing from all these places. We are the last stand for salmon in the Pacific Northwest. After that, Alaska is the only one left. We have to take care of these rivers and let ourselves turn into an island of pavement.

Lynda finished her presentation with something joyful. There was a video showing the wonder, beauty, and majesty of orcas. We are so lucky to live with these whales - the sound of their breathing and the sight of their spy hops reminds us they are mammals just like us. They have a sense of place just like us in Puget Sound and the rivers that feed Puget Sound. There was so much excitement that the whales were here and it seemed like they were so glad to be home because of the way they were playing in the waters. Her main message was “let it never end”. We hope that these salmon are here to ensure orcas are here to stay for many generations to come.

There were several questions following Lynda’s presentation. A question was asked about when Lynda was first following the orcas that were starving, couldn’t she just throw a bunch of salmon into the water to keep them from starving? The Lummi Nation started to do ceremonial feedings but NOAA shut that down because it is illegal to feed wild animals. Interestingly, J50 that was starving was given medicated fish that was stuff with antibiotics. They took live Chinook salmon from a hatchery but she did not go anywhere near it. Unfortunately, she died. John Durban and Holly Fearnbach survey these orcas through drone photography. J pod is doing better this year so they are getting food from somewhere.

There was a comment about fishing restrictions to preserve and increase various fish populations. It seems the obvious answer is to cut back on commercial or recreational fishing regulations. This comment was noted as very timely as NOAA is currently in the process of starting a moratorium on fish to ensure it allows more fish to be left for the whales. There are only 75 of them left. It begs the question; do we really need to eat the Chinook salmon? Perhaps we need to leave it for the bears and the whales – the animals that need it more than us. The tribal fisheries today are producing very small amounts. There needs to be a dedicated fund for conservation because there isn't enough money being set aside to help orcas and salmon. If you give orcas what they need, they will take care of the rest.

NRNC spoke about the traveling orca exhibit going around to the small marine science centers in the Salish Sea that addresses this story. They wanted to get the word out to others in the community to create the system of caring. Seattle Times is very proud of this travelling exhibit as it brings together the graphic artwork of Emily Eng and the photography of Steve Ringman. This was a group effort and this exhibit will allow families and visitors to hear about the story as well.

Lynda was thanked for sharing this story and the work she has done to publish this story. There was a question asked about Nisqually Chum and if she could speak more about that. Chum is crucial as it is the last fresh fish of the year and important to the Southern Resident orcas and tribal families. It is critical to rebuild these chum runs. Lynda mentioned she would like to return and speak again when these meetings happen in-person to talk more about this topic. She loves groups like this because of their investment in issues like this. As a community, people need to be called to the table to be a liaison with the developers and real estate then work towards a goal. What better marketing tool than the beauty of Washington state. This can only be done if we all come together.

The League of Women Voters is hoping to come out with a shoreline study so there was a question asked about shoreline protection, impacts on development, and the need for the adoption of net gain. This is an important conversation but there was not enough time to continue discussion so it was suggested that Lynda be invited back to finish the conversation in the future.

5. For the Good of the Order (Recorded)

Timothy Ransom, Ph.D., Author

Tim expressed thanks to Lynda for her presentation.

His book takes a look at the essential question of how the Nisqually Delta survived. The book tells a story of a farm on the edge of the Nisqually Delta as being in the “eye of the storm” as the struggle developed over what is the highest and best use of the land there. It also looks at the subsequent development of the land use policy, which was non-existent and pro-development, then later increasingly restrictive and protective of the natural environment over a 100-year period.

A map was shared to show the location of Braget Farm. There was also an aerial photo taken of Braget Farm from 2006, after the tribe had acquired the Braget property from the last surviving owner, Kenny Braget. They started breaking out the dikes to help restore the salmon population into the estuary.

A picture of Kenny Braget was shown. Tim began talking to Kenny around 2000. Eventually, he came up with a number of questions to help tell his story such as, how and why did the family hold on to the land for so long? What did it cost them to do so? Tim met Kenny in the context of NRC. Tim read an excerpt from his book from the prologue where he described Kenny's character. This also included what projects and groups he was involved in and his experience in some of the meetings Kenny participated in.

The Braget story began with Kenny's grandfather Ole Braget, who brought his family to Tacoma in 1893. A rumor said he was on one of the first trains into town. Eventually, he looked for a site for his horse ranch. Through his wife's cousin, he learned that a ranch was for sale on a farm that belonged to a family and he bought it. He showed a map of the different properties and their owners throughout history. The rest of the land eventually became owned by Daniel Mounts including what eventually became the site of a golf course.

There were many proposals to use the Nisqually Delta but it all started with a developer from Tacoma named Frank Ross. He proposed that the property be used to make Nisqually City as they wanted it to be the Philadelphia of the West. Mounts split the property up and sold it to many of his relatives. The whole thing crashed in the late 1890s with the Depression and other hardships. At the same time, there was a railroad coming up from Kalama, what was then called Sherlock, into Tacoma.

There was also the development of the Brown Farm to create a model agricultural process. One of its most significant pieces was the advent of diking to the Nisqually Delta, the first of any major size. At this time, it was done by hand and with horses. Ole Braget was watching carefully across the river for his own diking efforts. This came to an end with the advent of World War I and prohibition which impacted Brown's financial ability to continue to support this farm, which required a lot of labor.

The railroad had already come through, as mentioned earlier, heading to Tacoma. In 1910, a second branch of railroad was put in to create the Point Defiance Line directly bisecting the Mounts property and Braget property. This created a lot of problems for both the Bragets and the Mounts. This was a headache that would last with the family through the remainder of its ownership. One of the most impactful things to the Nisqually Tribe was Pierce County's decision to provide property to the U.S. Army for Camp Lewis. The original proposal was that the camp boundary would be set at the river thereby condemning out both the Bragets and the Mounts from all of their land. Daniel Mounts had connections to the judiciary in Tacoma that did some magic and the army pulled this boundary back to the edge of the golf course. The Nisqually world would have looked very different if this had gone on all the way down to the river.

Then, there was a period of about almost 40 years where there were no major developments like that. This is where the life of the Bragets began. Ole Braget had set up a horse ranch and eventually had two sons, Morris and Walter, to whom he sold it with the intention of starting a dairy farm. Morris was killed in an automobile accident at the tender age of 20 so Walter was left in charge of this 145-acre dairy farm. One of the first things he needed to do was get help and some of that help included looking for a wife. He married Marcelene Welch from Dupont and had two sons, Kenny Braget born in 1932, and Thomas Ward born in 1936. They were raised as hardworking farm boys, but also with a love of hunting and automobiles. Kenny inherited from his father the understanding of the importance of wildlife, which became a very significant part of why the Bragets held onto this farm for so long. Kenny went to Washington State College and got a degree in agriculture, joined the Navy, and then came back. While he was gone, his brother died drowning in an attempt to help hunters who were caught in a storm. Kenny returned to help his family and never left. Bird hunting was important to the family and to many others. Since the beginning, the aboriginal peoples harvested birds and after them came a variety of Duck Clubs usually run by the wealthy. This would be both a source of income for the Bragets, who leased their flats properties to these clubs, as well as a major headache as there were some challenges with them eventually.

Behind the scenes, there were some things going on that eventually became very problematic. The first was the purchase of land in 1906 by the Dupont Company. This large holding was directly adjacent to the Braget property on the northeast side. The Dupont Company bought 5 square miles and created the town of Dupont and became their neighbor. One positive aspect for the Braget family was that it brought Marcelene's father, Thomas Welch, to the region for work at the plant so she grew up there in that town. Interestingly, Marcelene had just graduated from a new program to produce nurses in the country. It was a 5 year program at the University of Washington and 3 years as an intern at Tacoma General Hospital. When Walt proposed to her about the 3rd, 4th, or maybe 8th time, she finally accepted and it totally changed her life, of course.

One of the interesting moments in time was when Frank Ross ended up owning some property in the Nisqually Valley. He wrote to Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s proposing that the delta should be used for war and Navy purposes. He wanted to fill the flats and straighten the river to make it a desirable location for sea planes, land planes, and airplanes. Fortunately and fortuitously, the Roosevelt administration ignored him.

In 1957, the Washington State Department of Conservation and Developments director asked the Navy to consider the Nisqually flats as a location for a Naval Magazine. He proposed a facility with a \$6.5 million budget and employment for up to 900 civilians and 250 military personnel, that it be moved to Nisqually from their current location at Port Chicago. However, 14 years previously, the Port Chicago facility exploded as 4,000 tons of ammunition blew up killing everyone at the port. Starting in the 1950s, both the Port of Olympia and the Department of Game started paying closer attention to the Delta as a possibly venue for fulfilling their missions. There was an intense 10-year period that impacted the Braget family as they fought to maintain control of their property in the face of the differing views about the highest and best use of their land. In 1964, a couple of brothers had purchased about 700 acres out there on the Thurston County side across the river from the Braget Farm and applied for

permits with the Army Corps of Engineers. They wanted to build up the land with hydraulic fill dredged from off site or sanitary fill, as they had a relationship with Seattle's major garbage collectors who was looking for sites to fill. They wanted to know if the Bragets wanted to join them in this effort. This proposal was one of the first steps in engaging a whole set of people in responding to protect the Nisqually Delta. Particularly, Bud McBride had property just south of the Bragets. Bud became a vigorous advocate and became one of the co-developers of the Nisqually Delta Association. It was eventually made impossible by Thurston County finally stepping up and passing legislation to prevent this kind of activity in this watershed.

In 1964, the northbound lanes of the freeway began to be talked about and were finally finished by 1968. Prior to that time, one of the few pieces of road that went out to Portland then called the "missing link", now called Martin Way, was the source of a lot of stress because it passed through the Bragets' land. There were many difficult conversations between the Bragets and the Highway Department about where the boundaries were for each others' land. Dan Evans enters the picture, around 1965, as a state engineer for the Highway Department before becoming governor. He was actually evicted from the Braget property by Kenny's father because of disagreements about who to trust and the placement of where the borders should be. He became a symbol of the State's disinclination to honor the rights of property owners as he went on to create the Department of Ecology and facilitate the passage of the State environmental policy act and other legislation in the early 1970s in response to problems arising from the proposed use of critical state resources like the Nisqually Delta. In 1965, there was a proposal for a super port to be put in the Nisqually delta. This battle didn't come to an end until 1974 with the creation of the refuge. This was the final straw and brought about the creation of the Nisqually Delta Council.

Some well-known people leading the conservation and preservation forces were Margaret McKenny (co-founder of the Nisqually Delta Association), Flo Brodie, Helen Engle (Tahoma Audubon Society) that got involved as well. In 1969, Margaret McKenny and Flo Brodie, who had significant contacts in the State legislature, proposed to the Bragets that they raise \$2 million to buy them out. The Bragets refused because they didn't understand why they wanted to make the land available to the public. They also didn't really trust them to raise those funds. The Tahoma Audubon Society published a report proposing the Delta be used as a natural biological laboratory and wildlife refuge with significant public access. The Bragets did not enjoy hearing about this because they did not like that amount of access the public would have to their land.

As time passed, in 1970 a representative from the Port of Tacoma showed up to the Braget Farm and offered a check for \$1 million to buy them out. Walt was on the verge of accepting when Kenny refused because he was concerned about his own future and legacy. They got into a fist fight and Walt told Kenny he doomed himself to milking cows for another 50 years. After Walt's death in 1983 and as Marcelene's health was deteriorating, they slowly came to the realization that they would need to sell. The goal was to find the right buyer who shared their values and mission. After Marcelene's death in 1984, Kenny put an end to the land as a dairy farm because he couldn't manage it on his own.

There were some big players that began to make their interests more apparent as the farm declined in health. The Nisqually River Taskforce was convened by Dan Evans in 1971 and published the Nisqually Plan, which recommended the state make a wildlife refuge there. Thanks to the herculean efforts of a coalition of advocates like Brody and McKenny, the Brown Farm was finally purchased by the Department of Interior in 1974 which brought an end to the super port proposal by the Port of Tacoma. The Department of Interior were hoping to purchase all 3,000 acres but the Braget family wasn't ready to part with the land and legacy yet as this was a time when Walt was still alive.

The Weyerhaeuser company made their appearance in 1978 by buying out the Dupont land. There was a decision to use solo point sewage treatment for Northwest Landing. There were many issues of great concern in protecting the Nisqually Delta. Kenny had been attending many meetings because he felt that land owners were not well-represented. Kenny got more involved in going after the Weyerhaeuser company as well but it was more stress that he really didn't need.

Finally in 1987, the Nisqually River Council was created where Kenny met George Walter and David Troutt. The tribe wanted to build a hatchery at Clear Creek but needed off site mitigation. Kenny who was then in need of funds eventually proposed that they break out the dikes on 12 acres of the Braget Farm as mitigation. That agreement was struck and George Walter asked how much he would take for the whole piece. This began the negotiations for the tribe buying the land. Kenny was much more amenable to selling to the tribe because they had always been very nice neighbors. The neighborliness of the tribes as opposed to the bureaucracy of the government was a breath of fresh air for him. The land was purchased in 2000 and the tribe began breaking out the dikes for the purpose of salmon production. Kenny was given life estate but his health was declining. He was known to say, after the sale of the property, "if we can't raise cows, let's raise salmon". It was very traumatic for him to watch the work that his family had put in for 100 years come to an end. He continued hunting until he passed away in 2006. Eventually that year, the Braget Marsh was dedicated by the tribe at an event with federal and state officials and members of the public there. Billy Frank Jr. wrote in a tribal publication that Tim felt became Kenny's Eulogy. He read from this excerpt, "Today, those fields are a nesting place for birds, an incubator for young salmon, and a refuge for returning adult salmon. Despite the pressures of growth that Kenny felt and fought much of his life, the estuary is a place where you can still smell the tide that supports life throughout the watershed. That estuary is Kenny's memorial." Tim added that Kenny and his family worked all those years to maintain a way of life that would so easily be reconverted to support a habitat when the time came.

There was a time for questions. A comment was shared that this book should be required reading for everyone sitting at this table as it would help to understand the historical context of the land. It seems essential to understand the background of this place we put so much work into. The book can be ordered at most bookstores, libraries, and online shops. It is also available on kindle. Tim mentioned there was about 50 years of history before the Bragets came to the area and there is a blog he started that goes into more detail about that history if anyone is interested.

The title of the book was noted for being a great title. It was mentioned that “for the good of the order” was one of Kenny’s favorite phrases. There are many people in the Olympia area that had firsthand relationships with him or some members of his family.

There was a question asking about selling this book at the Refuge at the gift shop there. Someone also suggest this book could be put on the reading list for students at schools. Glynnis mentioned the Refuge is still closed. She is talking to volunteers that oversee the merchandise and will be in touch with Tim about selling it in the gift shop when things open up again. Several people expressed interest in reading this book. The stories that Tim shared in this presentation had an impact on many meeting attendees. These stories are so valuable in sharing the history of the Nisqually Watershed. Tim was thanked for the rich and valuable history that he provides with this book. It is really going to be important for the community to know and understand the history of this area to build appreciation and stewardship for this land.

6. For the Good of the Order

Next month’s meeting will be a retreat and we already have a few presentations lined up including some updates from Ashley with NIT. NRC members will be informed of the agenda.

7. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 11:55am.

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