



# NISQUALLY LAND TRUST

## Summer 2020

### First Nisqually River Trail Crossing One Step Closer

*If Successful, Yelm Proposal Will Start Design and Construction*

The dream of the first pedestrian-and-bike bridge across the Nisqually River has taken another important step forward, with the City of Yelm's application to the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) for design and construction funding.

As envisioned, the crossing would be an extension of the Yelm-Tenino and Yelm Prairie Line trails, fourteen miles of paved path that connect with the popular Chehalis-Western Trail.

Currently, the trail system ends just past Yelm, about one mile short of the Nisqually River. The extension would cross the river and, ultimately, connect the Thurston County trails with the City of Roy and the Pierce County trail network.

"That would transform the Yelm-Roy area into a recreational hub and a regional draw," said Land Trust Executive Director Joe Kane. "And it would be a classic

example of how good conservation can be good business for our local economies."

The Yelm proposal will be entered in the WWRP ranking competition later this year. The ranked list will then be submitted to the State Legislature for funding consideration in the next legislative session.

Yelm and the Land Trust first launched the idea back in 2016, when the Land Trust acquired key salmon-habitat properties adjoining a city-owned railroad trestle that crosses the Nisqually River.

The trestle had not been used for rail transport in decades. The Land Trust properties had the potential to do double-duty as support for trail access if the Yelm Prairie Line trail was extended and the trestle converted for non-motorized use.

Then Pierce County's regional trails advocacy group,

*Continued on page 9*

*This unused rail trestle over the Nisqually River would be converted to a trail for cyclists and pedestrians.*



*The Nisqually Land Trust  
acquires and manages critical  
lands to permanently benefit the  
water, wildlife, and people of the  
Nisqually River Watershed.*

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*The accreditation seal recognizes land conserva-  
tion organizations that meet national standards  
for excellence, uphold the public trust, and ensure  
that conservation efforts are permanent.*

## President's Letter Changing Seasons

Hello Nisquamilly, I hope this Summer  
newsletter finds you all safe and well.

In the past I've incorporated the theme of  
change into many of my President's letters –  
so, why change now!

We ended 2019 celebrating our 30th anni-  
versary and 30 years of positive change in the  
Nisqually Watershed. We entered 2020 hop-  
ing to carry that momentum forward along  
with a significant planned change. A bittersweet change – Joe Kane  
announced to the Board his desire to retire mid-2020.



I KNOW, so I went to Merriam-Webster looking for an example of a  
bittersweet change, and there it was in black and white: "Joe's retire-  
ment announcement."

Bitter/Sad: How can we imagine NLT without Joe's personality and en-  
trepreneurial spirit? Sweet/Happy: Joe is retiring at the top of his game,  
in good health, and with years left to pursue his other passions. And as  
a Board of Directors we are fortunate for Joe's support, for a long lead-  
time for an ED search, and for his offer to assist during the transition  
(change).

Well, just as we got the search started another change arrived, an unex-  
pected change – COVID19.

Just as it has for all of you, Stay Home Stay Healthy has turned how  
we accomplish our work upside down. So our Board and staff want to  
assure you that we are adapting and managing the Land Trust to safely  
carry on. And with the assistance of our longtime planning mentors,  
Solid Ground Consulting, we are moving forward to find the best can-  
didate for the Executive Director position.

Nisquamilly, please be safe, and thank you for allowing us to be stewards  
of your support.

Brian Sullivan  
Board President

# I'm Not Calling it Retirement

As those of you on our email list already know, later this year I'll be stepping down as executive director. It's been a great ride and a tough decision.

Many of you have no doubt heard the maxim that so famously (or infamously) drove the growth of Facebook: "Move fast and break things." Well, here in the Nisqually Watershed, we go slow and fix things. When you restore a river, you don't design for quarterly financial returns. You design for centuries of salmon returns.

And sometimes going slow and fixing things means changing direction.

We have a solid organization with a strong board and staff, loyal and generous supporters and volunteers, and a rich web of partners. That won't change. But I'm at that stage of life when I need more Saturdays and fewer Mondays.

And I don't think of it as leaving. I think of it as re-defining the relationship. I'll always be part of things Nisqually. As we like to say, in so many ways our precious Nisqually River Watershed really is the center of the universe.

And, as I said, it's been a great ride. Twenty years all told – five as a board member, fifteen as executive director. I have enjoyed myself immensely. I feel in-



*Overlooking Busy Wild Creek in the Nisqually Community Forest.*

credibly lucky and grateful to have held this job and, especially, to have worked and become friends with so many outstanding people. I've had more fun, and sheer satisfaction, than I ever anticipated.

The Nisqually way is all about cooperation and collaboration, and, together, we've accomplished some amazing things. We've protected a lot of land. We've restored a lot of land. With bold initiatives like our community forest and our carbon project we've helped expand the conservation toolkit statewide. And we have species alive in the watershed today that might not be here without us.

I can't thank you all enough. It's been an honor and a privilege to walk this path with you, and I hope that as soon as time and circumstance allow, one way or another, I can tell each of you that in person.

Meanwhile, there is still a lot of good work to do, and it's more urgent now than ever. I plan to keep my shoulder to the wheel. I'll see you on the river.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Kane".

Joe Kane  
Executive Director



*Joe (right) leads a team from Microsoft on a tour of our Mount Rainier Gateway carbon-credit project. Microsoft purchased all of our credits.*

# Species Highlight

## Ants: Guardians and Gardeners

By Addie Schlusell, Land Steward

When I was in college, I interned for a summer at a wildflower preserve near my hometown in



Addie Schlusell, Nisqually Land Trust Land Steward

Pennsylvania. A longtime volunteer trained me to give informational tours of the preserve, and one of the first things she told me was that she had just read a book called *Ant-Plant Interactions*. Call me a nature nerd, but I was hooked!

Not only is “ant-plant interactions” fun to say,

but the volunteer also had fascinating stories about the hidden ways that ants and plants benefit each other. I told visitors about ant-plant interactions all summer long. Plants are not always happy to be interacting with ants. Some ants harm plants by eating them directly or “farming” other destructive pests like aphids. Other times, however, ants form relationships with plants, in which both the ant and the plant benefit.

Unlike bees and butterflies, ants are not particularly good at pollination. They serve plants in other ways. One common example comes from the tropics, where the bullhorn acacia tree and the aptly named acacia ant are found. The acacia trees provide room and board to the ants: nectar and other food to eat, and hollowed-out thorns to live in. The ants in turn protect the tree by biting, stinging, or pruning any animals or plants that come too close.

Luckily for us, ants play a less vicious role in the western Washington plant community.

Here, ants disperse the seeds of wildflowers like trillium, wild ginger, and bleeding heart. These flowers attach tiny, nutritious food packages to their seeds to entice ants, which collect the seeds and bring them

back to feed their colonies. After eating the food packages, the ants discard the seeds in their rubbish heap – a safe, nutrient-rich place for a young wildflower to take root.

Sometimes nature can be harsh, full of predators and parasites. But mutually beneficial interactions between ants and plants remind me that both sides can benefit. Next time you stumble upon some wild ginger or trillium, take a minute to remember the ants who planted it there.



Who knew there existed intricate relationships between your favorite flowers and these small insects?



After trillium and bleeding hearts bloom in spring their seeds are dispersed by the secret work of ants.

# Board and Staff Transitions

## Changing Seasons, Changing Faces



Mary Gentry

After serving the longest term permitted under Land Trust policy, All-Time All-Star Most Valuable Hall of Fame board member and vice president **Mary Gentry** stepped down in December, nine years after she first joined our board.

During most all of that time Mary also chaired our Development Committee, transforming it into not only a powerful economic engine but also Command Central for a skein of events and festivities widely renowned for their high energy, community building and good spirits – all in all, very much like Mary herself.

During Mary's tenure the Land Trust grew tremendously, tripling the amount of land under our protection and our rosters of supporters and volunteers, doubling our staff and operating budget, and building key partnerships with local institutions like Olympia Federal Savings. "You don't replace a Mary Gentry," said Land Trust Executive Director Joe Kane. And the good news is we won't have to, at least not entirely – Mary will continue to chair our Development Committee. Thanks, Mary!



Mackenzie Davidson

**Mackenzie Davidson** has joined our Board of Directors in the newly created position of Student Board Fellow. Mackenzie graduated from Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma in 2020 with degrees in biology and environmental studies and a passion for conservation and ecology. She has interned with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Marine Mammals Investigative Unit and volunteered with the local organization Harbor WildWatch.

For Mackenzie growing up in the Pacific Northwest has inspired her to preserve and protect the marine ecosystems of the Puget Sound and the watersheds they are connected to, and to educate the public about these natural treasures. In her free time she enjoys scuba diving, cycling, hiking, and finding a sunny spot to hang a hammock. Welcome aboard, Mackenzie!



Susan Callender

After three and a half years as our Development Manager, and over twenty years as a fundraising professional, **Susan Callender** is sailing off into new waters – she's joined her husband, Alex, as Project Manager in their family firm, Land Services Northwest.

Susan did a great job of growing our fundraising program to the "next level," expanding it across the board and bringing new levels of sophistication to key elements, such as our annual auction and our major-donor program.

We'll miss you, Susan – and we wish you the best of luck out there tromping around those wetlands and pocket-gopher condos!

# We Buy Land Once. We Steward it Forever.

*Meet the Team Who Cares for Our 7,500 Acres*

The Land Trust buys land once, but we steward it forever. That's our commitment. It's a big job, and it falls to our intrepid stewardship team – Land Steward Addie Schlusel, Stewardship Assistant Courtney Murphy, and Volunteer Coordinator Sarah McCarthy.

They're the kind of young people who inspire real hope for the future. All three came to the Land Trust through AmeriCorps, the national program of voluntary public service, attracted by its promise of long hours and (barely) subsistence pay in exchange for the opportunity to do something meaningful for the common good.

Such a deal!

Addie completed her AmeriCorps term in 2018 and Courtney in 2019. To the Land Trust's great good fortune, both agreed to stay on as staff members when their current positions opened up. Sarah is in the middle of her AmeriCorps term right now.

Together, they care for our 7,500 acres of high-quality wildlife habitat, from Mount Rainier to Puget Sound. They also coordinate the recruitment, training, and nurturing of the hundreds of volunteers and over a thousand students who join us in the field every week of the (non-coronavirus) year.

In 2019 we planted our 300,000th native plant on our protected lands. And we're now growing over 2 million

trees across our properties. Concerned about climate change? Salmon recovery? Clean air and water? Plant a tree. Grow a tree. And help someone else do the same!

That's just part of what Addie, Courtney, and Sarah do. To get a peek behind the scenes of the incredibly glamorous world of land stewardship, we asked them to share some of what makes their jobs special.

## FAVORITE FIELD SKILL FALLING INTO CREEKS

### **Courtney Murphy, Stewardship Assistant**

Throughout my time with the Land Trust I've perfected the skill of falling into small bodies of water. A beaver pond in the Lower Ohop, the Middle Ohop wetland, and McKenna Creek are just a few of the waterways I've found myself having to crawl out of, soaked and trailing various aquatic plants.

I'm not particularly clumsy, but when I take a wrong step my instinct isn't to settle and reassess the situation—it's to get out as fast as possible, and for whatever reason that usually lands me further into the creek. And of course, days I fall into water are always days I need to attend a meeting or go to the bank immediately after work. But I don't mind. It's just another way to explore Nisqually Land Trust properties.



*This is the face of national service: (from left) Sarah, Courtney, and Addie all came to the Land Trust through the federal AmeriCorps program and its local affiliate, Washington Service Corps.*

## FAVORITE LAND TRUST VIEW LACKAMAS FLATS

### **Sarah McCarthy, Volunteer Coordinator**

Every field day working with the Land Trust promises beauty, whether it's a clear day and the mountain is out over Ohop Valley, or it's pouring and we're spotting a sprouting flower or fungi. Every day the biggest distraction to work is the desire to take out my phone and fill it with portraits of the Nisqually Watershed.

I get most excited, though, on days we visit my favorite vista point – along the Nisqually River on our Lackamas Flats property. Here the undercut bank has us stand high above a bend in the river, a great vantage point for viewing wildlife such as eagles and otters.

Directly across the river is a stand of cottonwood standing straight and sending long shadows across the water. You can't see far either up- or downstream, and I like taking time to wonder what hides around the corners. The view is a calming one, and in my mind, there's no better spot to stop and rest after a hard day's work.



*Sarah McCarthy's favorite view: Cottonwoods along the Nisqually River.*

## FOREVER FUND SUPPORTS OUR CREW

Each year at our annual dinner, we devote part of the evening to our "Forever Fund" – cash donations to support the work of our Stewardship crew.

With our live event cancelled this year, we plan to bring the Forever Fund online soon. We hope you'll keep an eye out for it. Thanks!



*Addie Schlusser planting live willow stakes with the help of her favorite field tool, the "pogo stick". Also known as a dipple bar.*

## FAVORITE STEWARDSHIP TOOLS POGO STICK

### **Addie Schlusser, Land Steward**

One mark of a stewardship professional is unreasonable enthusiasm about specific tools. Scotch broom season is starting? Time to break out the weed wrenches! Facing down a huge blackberry root with a shovel that just isn't doing the trick? The mattock is your new best friend!

Or take, for example, what we call the "pogo stick." Sometimes planting live stakes is hard because you need to push a stick 18 inches or deeper into the ground (The stick goes on to sprout roots and leaves and become a tree – a bit of natural magic.)

"Pogo sticks" help by drilling pilot holes. Imagine a pogo stick that doesn't have any springs and is made entirely out of rebar, so when you jump on it, it just sinks into the ground. Then, you can slip a live stake into the hole you've just created.

Incredibly specific situations call for equally specific tools, and I am always happy to gush about them.

# Volunteer Spotlight

## Chas Dreyfus: Saving Land by Saving Us Time

By Courtney Murphy, Stewardship Assistant

Chas Dreyfus is a new face around the Land Trust. As a volunteer stewardship assistant, he is the first volunteer to dive into our Landscape conservation database. He's been documenting easements on our properties and entering them into Landscape so the data is easy to find and use.



*Office Volunteer Chas Dreyfus has been helping input information into our new Landscape database*

Originally from San Francisco, Chas and his wife, Peggy, decided they would “retire to the Puget Sound area *sometime*.” They were drawn to the beauty of Western Washington and made the move to Olympia in 2017.

Before discovering the Land Trust, Chas was “hooked” on the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge. He and Peggy stopped there often when traveling on the I-5 corridor. When looking for a new volunteer opportunity, he “checked out the NLT website and found a great fit.”

Although Chas was only able to volunteer in our office

a few times before the “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order, he’s been working in the Landscape online database from home, “bringing order out of the chaos of information and organizing data to make it more accessible to the people who need it.” Thank you, Chas!

***Our deepest thanks to all our volunteers. Your help makes our work possible.***

**2020 SALMON BAKE & FLOAT TRIPS  
CANCELLED THIS YEAR**

Sadly, this year we’ve had to cancel our Annual Meeting and Salmon Bake and our July raft trips on the Nisqually River. These events are great opportunities to visit with friends and supporters and are the highlights of our year. We’ll miss them.

But we’re exploring new ways to connect with all of you and share news of our work. It’s still going strong, and you are still very much a part of it. We look forward to when we can see each other again. Take care until then!

## Stewardship Work Parties to Start Again Based on Phased Reopening – Stay Tuned

We hope to re-start our regular Wednesday and Saturday morning work parties again in July. Our plan for now is to resume volunteer field opportunities in Phase 3 of the state’s reopening, but we will wait and see if it is safe again to return to the field. New safety practices and safe distancing measures will be a priority.

Contact Sarah at [volunteer@nisquallylandtrust.org](mailto:volunteer@nisquallylandtrust.org) or (360) 489-3400, ext.106, for more information.

# First Nisqually River Trail Crossing One Step Closer

*Continued from cover page*

ForeverGreen Trails, picked up the baton and began building a coalition of supporters. The organization's Project & Communications Coordinator, Larry Leveen, helped the group win backing from the City of Roy, State Representatives J.T. Wilcox and Andrew Barkis, Senator Randi Becker, the Pierce County Council, the Thurston County Commission, and Congressman Denny Heck.

***The Yelm-Roy trail corridor would be a key link in creating a cross-state trail network "from Idaho to the Pacific Ocean" – Larry Leveen***

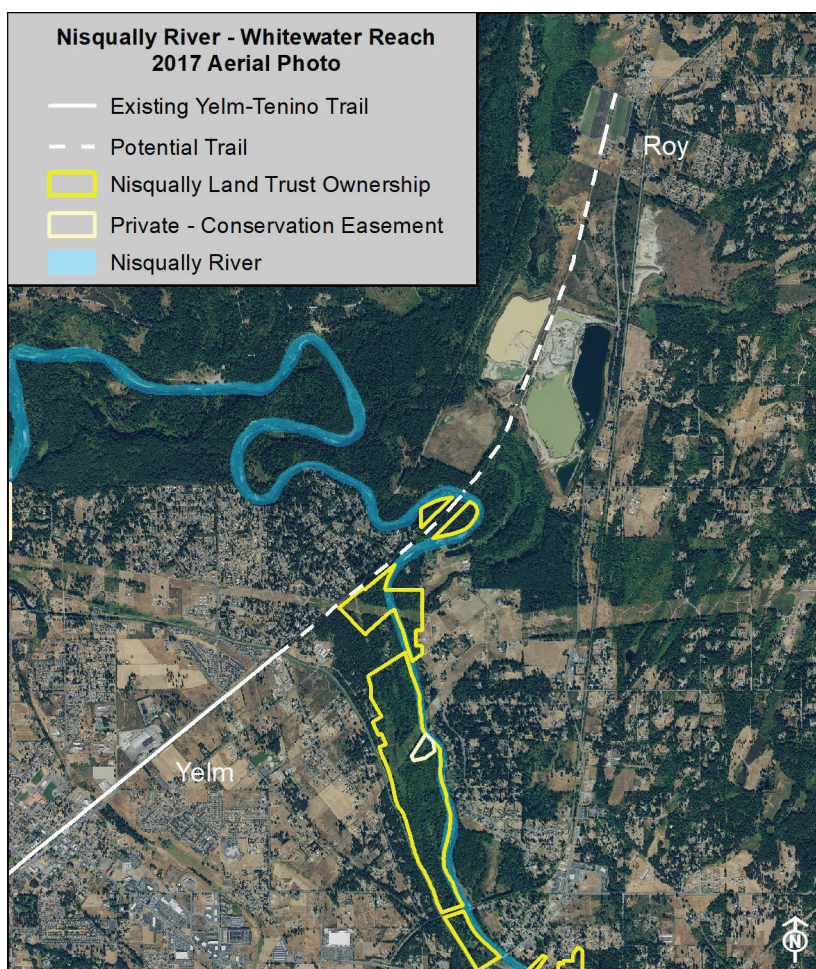
The ForeverGreen Trails coalition then helped Roy win a planning grant from the Puget Sound Regional Council. The Tacoma Washington Bicycle Club and the Foothills Rails-to-Trails Coalition provided all of the required local matching funds. ForeverGreen itself was awarded an in-kind planning grant from the National Park Service to convene stakeholders and begin a pre-planning process that will include public participation.

If successful, Yelm's WWRP grant would bring that process to the next level, including trail construction

## Learn More!

Visit the City of Yelm and the Puget Sound Regional Council's websites to get more detailed information and keep up to date about the trail extension.

City of Yelm • [www.yelmwa.gov](http://www.yelmwa.gov)  
Puget Sound Regional Council • [www.psrc.org](http://www.psrc.org)



*This map shows how Land Trust properties would support the extension of the Yelm-Tenino and Chehalis Western trails across the Nisqually River to Pierce County.*

to the Nisqually River shoreline. Further connection to Roy and beyond to the greater Pierce County trail network would occur in later phases. Pierce County recently added the River-to-Roy portion of the trail to its long-range parks plan, with design slated for 2024 and construction in 2026.

In addition to its importance in our own region, the Yelm-Roy trail corridor would be a key link in creating a cross-state trail network – one that would connect the existing Palouse-to-Cascades Trail and Willapa Hills Trail and someday “enable people to travel from Idaho to the Pacific Ocean on trails,” according to Larry Leveen.

# 2020 Conservation Auction Update

Although we had to cancel our live Conservation Dinner & Auction, we want to acknowledge the incredible generosity of our donors, sponsors, and volunteers who put a lot of energy and love into this event. We'll take it online later this fall. Thanks for your patience and understanding, and for sticking with us while we figure out this upside-down year.

## Thanks!

to our generous friends, sponsors, and donors—our Auction has raised close to \$60,000, *so far*, to help conserve the Nisqually River Watershed...*forever*

We have received \$7,000 in early gifts to our Forever Fund.



*The Forever Fund makes us all stewards of the Nisqually River.*

Thank you to our Sponsors

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GIVEBIG WASHINGTON  
THANK YOU



With your support we raised **\$13,156** for conservation in the Nisqually in just two days through GiveBig Washington! Thank you to our generous match donor and everyone who made a gift of every size.

# STAY CONNECTED TO THE NISQUALLY WATERSHED



*View of the Mashel River from our Van Eaton Conservation Property in Eatonville*

## STEWARDSHIP BLOG

NLT WEBSITE

Check out our monthly stewardship blog to keep up with our staff out in the field! Learn about restoration ecology, native wildlife species, invasive weed control and more.

## VIRTUAL EVENTS

NATURE WALKS & TALKS

While we've had to cancel our early Nature Walk field events, we're creating a series of virtual tours and talks. Check out our website later this month for a full schedule and info on how you can join in.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

FOLLOW OUR JOURNEY

Be sure to visit our social media sites. You'll find great photos and videos of our beautiful Nisqually Watershed. We are on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Links on our website.



**Nisqually Land Trust**

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STAY HEALTHY!

*Pacific nine bark is native to Western Washington and a spring favorite!*

## HELLLOOOO NISQUAMILY – WE'RE STILL HERE!

These are difficult times for all, but the state of your Nisqually Land Trust is good. We're not coming into the office, and fundraising has taken a hit. But we're not laying off anyone. We're paying our bills. And board and staff are in constant communication.

As for our work, we're pursuing major land transactions across the Nisqually Watershed: marine shoreline on Puget Sound, prime salmon habitat along the Nisqually River and Ohop Creek, forestlands above the Mashel River. And our field staff is carrying on with the essen-

tial service of maintaining our 7,500 acres of protected properties.

But one of the joys of being a local land trust is our interactions with friends, volunteers, and supporters. Putting that on hold has been a real challenge. We're working now to coordinate our volunteer program with the state's phased re-opening, and we're developing new ways to bring the Nisqually Watershed to you virtually.

With luck and discipline, we'll see you soon.

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