



Wilcox North Property. Photo by Tom Leeson, Western Rivers Conservancy

Nisqually Land Trust

Winter 2020 - 2021
Newsletter

Land Trust Acquires “Crown Jewel” Nisqually River Property

Epic Deal Protects Nearly a Mile of Critical Salmon Habitat

After five years and one of the most complex transactions in its history, the Land Trust is pleased to announce the acquisition of the longest remaining run of wild but previously unprotected salmon-producing shoreline on the Nisqually River.

“This property is the river’s crown jewel,” said the Trust’s Lands Committee Chair, George Walter. “In terms of salmon recovery, there’s nothing else quite like it.”

Totalling 174 acres of floodplain and upland forest, the property includes nearly one mile of high-quality habitat used by all five species of Pacific salmon native to the Nisqually Watershed, including Chinook salmon and steelhead trout, both of which are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

The property is zoned for up to 34 homesites but has never been developed. “That’s a big part of what makes this property so special,” said Walter. “This is completely intact habitat.

We can’t afford to lose a single foot of it, and it’s why we worked so hard to protect it.”

The property is located in the river’s Wilcox Reach, in the heart of the Land Trust’s Lackamas Flats Protected Area, along the Pierce County side of the river above Yelm.

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Pictured below: Wildlife is abundant on this completely intact 174-acre property along the Nisqually River. The site includes over one hundred acres of floodplain.



Photo: Tom Leeson, Western Rivers Conservancy

Meet Our New Executive Director on Page 4!



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 conservation organizations that meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust, and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Gratitude for Our Nisqually Family



During these challenging times, here at the Nisqually Land Trust we have a lot to be thankful for.

With the arrival of shorter days, winter provides us time to reflect on the past year and plan for the next. Our first thought is the hope that the rest of our Nisquamily are safe and well. And, in turn, through the darkness of the pandemic we have seen

our days brightened and illuminated by the support of our Nisquamily.

These rays of light include:

- Big support after the cancellation of our spring auction
- Our many partners helping us across the finish line of the five-year quest to acquire the “crown jewel” North Wilcox Reach property, along the heart of the Nisqually River.
- Staff and board showing up day after day with smiles and their A-games
- The overwhelming success of our first virtual Conservation Party and Auction
- Conservation as a marathon relay – the graceful passing of our leadership baton from Joe to Jeanette

Your unwavering support is our inspiration, our guiding light, as we plan for 2021.

Thank you! And one day soon, we hope we'll see you on the River, with shovel, paddle, or binoculars in hand. 🍷

Brian Sullivan
Board President

COVER ARTICLE

Wilcox North | *Continued from page 1*

“This project is also an outstanding example of the way we cooperate and build partnerships here in the Nisqually Watershed,” Walter said.

A long list of partners supported the Land Trust's work on the project, including Western Rivers Conservancy, which provided critical legal and transactional expertise, and Wilcox Farms, which adjoins the property and helped solve an access issue that had held up the transaction for years.

The Nisqually Indian Tribe, the lead entity for salmon recovery in the watershed, also provided key logistical and funding support. The Tribe's Chinook salmon and steelhead recovery plans rate the property highest priority for permanent protection.

The Land Trust won nearly \$1 million of the property's \$1.2 million purchase price through the Washington Recreation and Conservation Office's Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration program. It secured the remaining \$200,000 by winning one of the first grants awarded in the state's new Streamflow Protection program, administered by the Department of Ecology.

Top: The property adjoins the Land Trust's existing 207-acre Lackamas Flats Protected Area. The acquisition increases our opportunities to restore and maintain ecological function in one of the Nisqually River's most dynamic reaches.

Bottom: The property contains nearly one mile of pristine and undeveloped shoreline used by all five Nisqually salmon species.

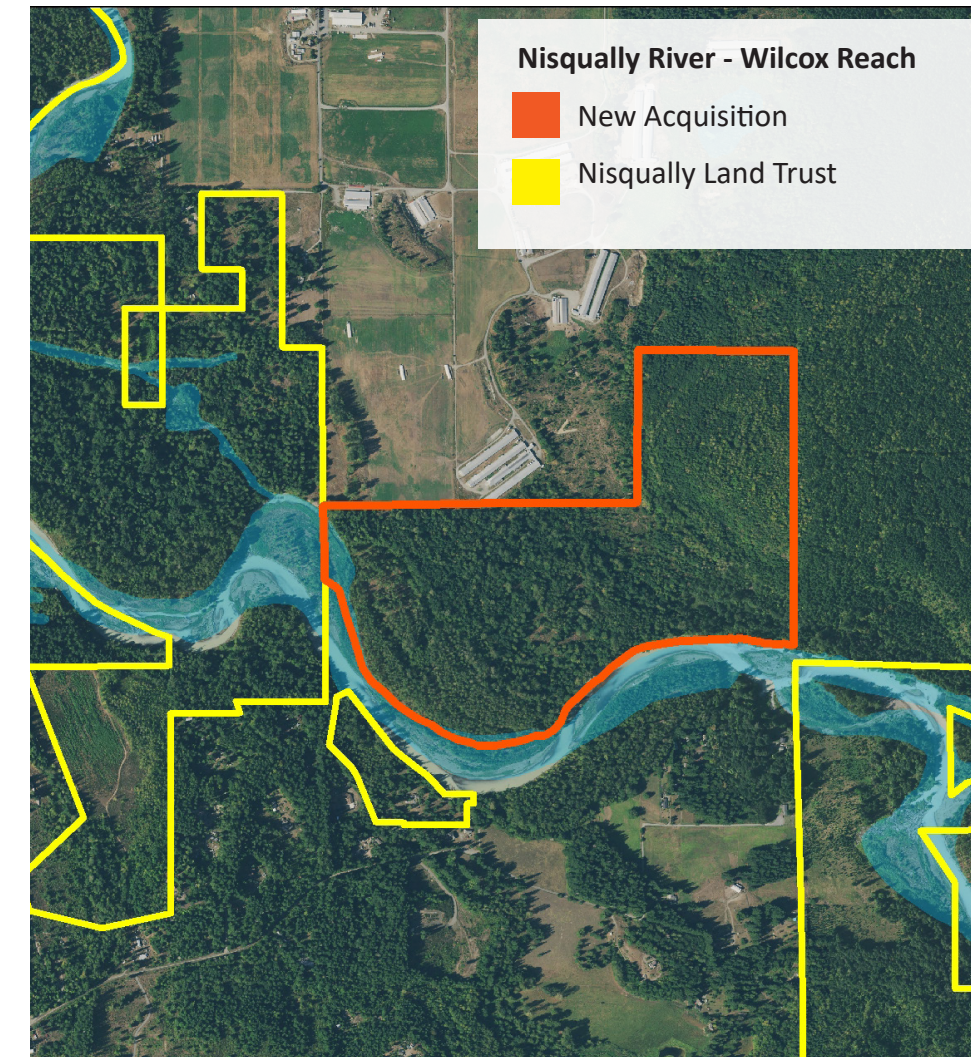


Photo: Jeanette Dörner



MEET OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Coming Home to the Nisqually

Home. For me home is community, a connection to the land, the plants, the animals. A place that feeds my soul.

The Nisqually watershed is my home. My parents bought a place on Muck Creek when I was 10. I explored the woods, discovered crawdads in the creek, watched the purple camas prairie flowers bloom every spring. I became connected deeply to the land.

I took the beauty and the wildness that surrounded me in my childhood for granted until I left for college. It was only then I realized what a special place Nisqually was: the water, the forests, the salmon, the oak savannah and prairies.

I saw that without protection and stewardship those special places could disappear. Over time as I came home for visits, I noticed a stand of trees cut down, a field converted to a strip mall, a native wildflower prairie cleared to build houses.

I decided to make it my life's work to care for these special places. I got a degree in

restoration ecology, created a Muck Creek community group to restore salmon habitat, and landed my dream job managing the Nisqually Indian Tribe's Salmon Recovery Program.

Working for the Tribe for a little over a decade, I heard elders' stories and deepened my understanding of their treaty rights to fish, hunt, and gather in their traditional places. I learned working to care for Nisqually was not just about plants and animals but also about the Tribe's ability to continue their culture and traditions. I became part of an incredible community of people all working together to care for and steward this unique watershed.

I never intended to leave Nisqually. But when state funding started declining and our science showed that our salmon were dying in Puget Sound I decided the best way I could help Nisqually was to work at the Puget Sound scale.

The verb form of home is "homing": such as what salmon do when they return from the ocean to the river where they were born.



Monitoring the Nisqually Estuary in 2007. Jeanette helped lead restoration of Nisqually Tribe estuary properties in the early 2000's and helped secure funding for the larger restoration in the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge.

After nine years away working with partners to strengthen Puget Sound salmon recovery efforts, I am now excited to be returning home.

Significant progress was made to care for the Nisqually while I was away. But there is plenty more to do and so much great work that is ongoing. I am so grateful for the opportunity to work with the incredible Nisqually community once again to take care of our home.

Jeanette Dorner
Executive Director

NLT Conservation Evening: Jeanette has been supporting the Land Trust in many ways over the years. This evening in 2011 she joined our Annual Conservation Dinner & Auction as a Watershed Partner with the Tribe and Billy Frank Jr.!



With Billy Frank Jr., 2011 Land Trust Auction

Site Visit: On a recent field visit Jeanette and Joe Kane visited the Nisqually Community Forest and our Mount Rainier Gateway Reserve, in the upper watershed – and set eyes on projects coming up in 2021.



With Joe Kane, Nisqually Community Forest

Next Generation: Jeanette has passed on her love for the natural world to her two wonderful kids. We discovered this photo gem in our archives – Jeanette brought her kids to plant trees at a Land Trust planting party in the Ohop Valley in 2013.



Planting trees with daughter Maria, left, and son Michael in the Ohop Valley.



Pictured: Ohop Creek Restoration Project. As the Nisqually Tribe's Salmon Recovery Program Manager, Jeanette helped initiate the work to protect and restore Ohop Creek. When the Nisqually Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan identified Ohop as a priority, Jeanette worked with the Nisqually Land Trust and other partners to move the project from an idea in the plan to a project on the ground.

The Nisqually Indian Tribe and the Nisqually Land Trust: An Origin Story

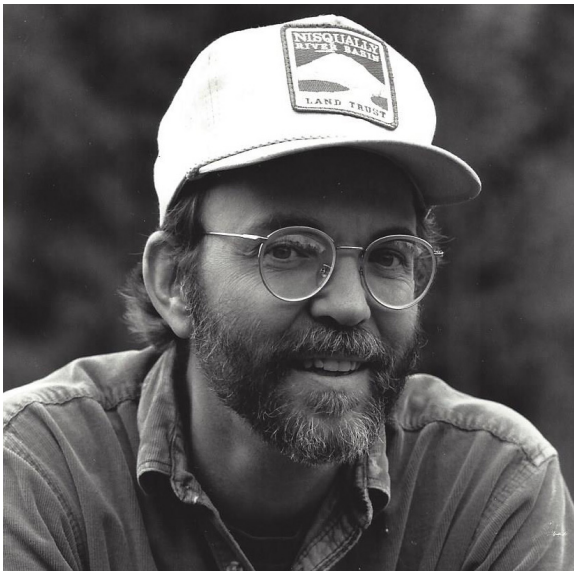
How the Land Trust Arose from the Fish Wars of the 1970s



Medicine Creek Treaty Tree. Courtesy Lacey Museum



Billy Frank Jr. Courtesy of Nisqually Indian Tribe



George Walter, Land Trust Founder, 1989



Billy Frank Jr., AP Photo/Ted S. Warren

“Billy said to me, ‘We gotta have one of those,’ and by 1989 we did.”

By George Walter

The Nisqually Land Trust’s roots in the Nisqually Watershed, homeland of the Nisqually Indian Tribe, go back over 150 years, to a time when the salmon runs so central to Nisqually Indian culture, trade and identity were abundant.

In 1854, the American territorial governor began negotiating treaties with native Indian peoples to gain full legal title to the land. The first treaty meeting occurred along She-Nah-Num, or Medicine, Creek. (This historic site is near the Nisqually Land Trust office and is now partially buried under fill from I-5).

One of the Medicine Creek Treaty terms was that the Indian signers secured for themselves and their descendants the right to fish, hunt and gather at all their usual and accustomed places, and for many years thereafter they continued to earn their livelihood through traditional ways.

But little by little, a huge commercial salmon-fishing industry developed in Washington, and the state did nothing to ensure that salmon returned to Indian fishing areas. In fact, the state began

using its police power against traditional Indian treaty-right fishing.

THE FISH WARS

This ushered in decades of fishing-rights conflict – the Fish Wars – a civil rights struggle that played out in the Pacific Northwest alongside the national struggles of that time. It culminated in a huge lawsuit held in U.S. District Court in Tacoma in the 1970s, before Judge George Boldt.

The Boldt decision, issued in February 1974, was a sensation. It upheld Indian fishing rights as the law of the land, set a treaty/non-treaty fishing allocation and established the right of Indian tribes to manage their own fisheries.

Billy Frank Jr., widely recognized as a leader in the treaty-right battles, became the Nisqually Tribe’s fisheries manager. One of his first acts was to write a plan for recovery of the traditional fishery. A central element was to restore the Nisqually River’s salmon-producing capacity, which had been severely degraded, its salmon runs decimated.

In 1977, Billy hired me as the Tribe’s environmental program manager to implement this part of the plan. Initially, we relied primarily on state and federal regulations to enforce habitat-protection rules and laws. Mostly this was a miserable failure. Private shoreline owners were cutting trees and damaging habitat without penalty. In 1982 Billy said to me, “We just can’t depend on the counties and the state to do the right thing.” We had to find another way.

A NEW ERA

In 1983 the Washington State Legislature directed the Department of Ecology to develop a Nisqually Watershed management plan. We became highly active in this planning; timber, agricultural and private-property advocates tried hard to hinder it. But by 1985, under Billy’s leadership, we brought these opponents on board. Together, we adopted the Nisqually River Management Plan and created the Nisqually River Council to oversee its implementation.

We also learned about land trusts – charities dedicated to conserving and protecting land and natural resources. Billy said to me, “We gotta have

one of those,” and by 1989 we did. Our founding board represented all sides: environmentalists, agriculture, timber, local governments, the Nisqually Tribe.

The point of this approach is that it’s non-governmental. It depends on voluntary, cooperative commitments to permanently protect shoreline habitat. And that is what we have done, acre by acre and then mile by mile, over the past 30 years.

FULFILLING BILLY’S VISION

The Nisqually Land Trust’s mission, in large part, is to fulfill Billy Frank’s vision for the Nisqually River – and thus to help bring some justice to the Nisqually Indians, who for so long have witnessed their fishing economy and way-of-life attacked and destroyed. And who now, we hope and trust, will witness its steady recovery.

George Walter has managed the Nisqually Indian Tribe’s Environmental Program since 1977. He founded the Nisqually Land Trust in 1989, served as its board president until 2011, and currently chairs its Lands Committee.

STAFF AND BOARD CHANGES

A Year of Transitions

We have had dedicated staff and board members throughout our history. Even as some are now transitioning away they never really leave the Nisquamly. And we welcome our newest members.



Fletcher Ward

New Office Manager Fletcher Ward is a thirty-year resident of the South Sound, twelve of them spent at The Evergreen State College as a database/business analyst and program coordinator. He’s also a media designer and producer, and a musician and teacher. He says that time

spent living in wilderness areas in California and the South Sound fuel his “great enthusiasm for helping the Land Trust continue in its mission to protect our shared environment.” Welcome to the inner wilderness of our office operations, Fletch!



Susannah Prenoveau

Susannah Prenoveau is our new Volunteer Coordinator, coming to us through the Washington Service Corps AmeriCorps Program. Before that she worked as an educator and training specialist for military bases and colleges overseas and here in Washington. She fell

for the Northwest on her first visit, over fifteen years ago, and she still loves to hike, camp, and simply be still and observe nature outside whenever she can, even if it’s just “the wetlands behind my back yard.” Pass the fig bars, Susannah!



Rylee Uhrich

In August, after two years creating order from chaos as our Office Manager, Rylee Uhrich decamped for the American Southwest to continue her Master of Divinity studies working as a Unitarian Universalist Ministerial Intern. Now she lives in a tiny house looking out on

the Santa Rita Mountains and hikes regularly in the desert and sky islands of the region. Rylee’s wit, compassion, and keen intelligence infused every part of the Land Trust operations. We miss you, Rylee. Thanks for all of your good work!



Michele Buckley

New board member Michele Buckley grew up in Olympia and has been exploring the Nisqually Watershed since she was a child – her mom, Ann Cooke, was a devoted Land Trust supporter. Michele now lives in Steilacoom and loves spending her weekends hiking

with her husband, their twin girls, and their dog. She served eight years as an active-duty Army attorney and continues to serve in the Army Reserves. In her day job, she’s corporate counsel for a major tech company in Seattle. Welcome aboard, Michele!



Martin McCallum

Board Member Martin McCallum is stepping down after completing two three-year terms. Martin came to the Land Trust as a stewardship volunteer, planting trees and pulling weeds, and is a graduate of the Watershed’s Stream Stewards program. We’ll miss his en-

thusiasm, his abundant good humor, and his extensive knowledge of both the natural and human history of the Nisqually – which made him an excellent guide and field companion, and a passionate and insightful board member. Thanks, Martin!

CREATING A LEGACY

Today, some 78 percent of the Nisqually River shoreline is in permanent conservation status, making it one of the most well-protected rivers in the state

The Land Trust has permanently protected 7,790 acres of wildlife habitat

Over a hundred volunteer stewards help us restore and protect the land each year

We and our partners have planted over 400,000 native trees and shrubs on Land Trust lands



Joe Kane | Executive Director

After fifteen years as the Land Trust’s executive director, Joe Kane is dialing things back to have “more Saturdays and fewer Mondays” – but he’ll stay on for the near future in a part-time role, handling land transactions and special projects like our carbon-credit program. (Hey Joe: You know what we do on Saturdays – plant trees! See you on the river!)

2020 CONSERVATION PARTY & AUCTION

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LAND SERVICES NORTHWEST Environmental Services Inc.

Thank you for helping us raise critical funds to protect and restore Nisqually Watershed habitat through our Forever Fund. We received \$45,250 in donations that will directly support stewardship of our conservation lands!



This year the Nisqually Watershed was brought to you virtually! With your patience and continuous support we were able to have a Conservation Party online with our favorite host, JW Foster. Thanks to the support of our sponsors, item donors, volunteers, and YOU, our Annual Conservation Auction raised \$116,108 for land protection and restoration in our beautiful Nisqually River Watershed.

Please visit our website to see all of the local business and generous supporters who donated auction items.

Reducing Flood Risk on the Nisqually

In 2019, Bill Camp and Sandy Lipincott sold their Nisqually River property to the Land Trust, with the right to continue living on the land. But when flooding in February 2020 eroded the banks of the Nisqually River to within 30 feet of their well, they decided not to risk another winter on the property.

Bill and Sandy moved to Vancouver, Washington, in late summer. Since then, Land Trust staff, volunteers, and contractors have been hard at work

to clean up the site before the winter rains. With the help of South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity, we salvaged \$2,500 worth of household materials from the property, and the house has been demolished.

While we miss seeing Bill and Sandy around the watershed, it is a relief that the river can now run its course here without putting anyone's home in danger. Many thanks to Bill and Sandy for all that they have done for the Nisqually Watershed!

Partnering for the Planting Season

With the turn towards shorter days and longer rains, we're saying goodbye to the summer months of pulling Scotch broom and hello to planting season. This year, we began at Powell Creek Protected Area, in a 60-acre field formerly owned by Spooner Farms. We and our partners and volunteers planted over 12,000 native trees and shrubs here over the past two years, and we're planning to plant another 10,000 this winter.

We could never get this done without our amazing partner organizations. The Nisqually Indian Tribe's Natural

Resources crew will take on the bulk of the project, planting over 8,000 plants in early 2021.

The Nisqually River Education Project (NREP) was our key partner this fall. Typically, NREP organizes service-learning field trips to bring local students out for planting days. When the COVID-19 pandemic scrapped that plan, NREP stepped up to recruit community groups and other volunteers for safe, socially distanced planting parties. A big thanks to our partners and volunteers for their hard work!



Bill Camp watched 60 feet of high bank near his home erode in a single season.



The local Habitat for Humanity salvaged household materials from the demolition.



The former house site after demolition day. Now natural river processes can take their course without displacing residential homes.



New plantings at our Powell Creek Protected Area

Nisqually NATURE EVENTS



Mainstem of the Nisqually River



What's the state of Salmon Recovery in the Nisqually Watershed? The Land Trust and its watershed partners, the **Nisqually Indian Tribe** and the **Nisqually River Council**, addressed this during a live virtual panel. Check out the full video on our YouTube channel!



Thank you to our 2020 Nature Events Sponsor! Learn more about their commitment to the environment at <https://www.mytpu.org/community>



In October, we had the opportunity to get out on the land with mushroom enthusiasts Steve Ness, Kitty Lundeen-Ness, and Melodie Gates from the **South Sound Mushroom Club** (SSMC). Club members led a socially-distanced foray through our Yelm Shoreline Protected Area. Participants practiced their mushroom-spotting skills, learned identifying tips, and overall had a great time hanging out in the forest! If you'd like to get involved with SSMC, check out their website at: www.southsoundmushroomclub.com



With our Nature Walks on pause we figured out a way to meet virtually. The **Nisqually Community Forest** (NCF) Board of Directors, **Nisqually River Council**, and **Northwest Natural Resources Group** held an online panel discussion this fall. Visit our YouTube channel to watch the full video and learn how a working forest is managed to benefit local communities. Photo: NCF Directors Paula Swedeen & Joe Kane. Courtesy of WA Environmental Council

At the beginning of the stay-at-home order, Land Trust Site Steward and all-star volunteer Meredith Rafferty led two virtual site tours of her favorite Land Trust Protected Areas. Thank you, Meredith, for the nature moments in our living rooms!

Nisqually Land Trust

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2020 Conservation Appeal

Please consider a year-end gift to help protect land, water, and wildlife in the Nisqually River Watershed.

Our success depends on the support of the wonderful folks in our community who care deeply about our Nisqually Watershed. Contributions from our friends, like you, are the foundation of everything we do.

You can easily make a donation online at nisquallylandtrust.org. Call us at 360.489.3400 for more information. Thanks!



Photo by: Matthew Williams