



NISQUALLY LAND TRUST

Fall 2025 Newsletter

**INSIDE -
NISQUALLY NATIVE
CHINOOK RETURN!**

Feature story on page 4 & 5

Nisqually Tribe rediscovers wild Nisqually Chinook that were previously thought extinct! See page 4 for full article.



Pictured, Walker Duval Nisqually Indian Tribe Natural Resources Biologist, shows off one of the rediscovered Native Nisqually Chinook salmon.

Photo Credit: Rene Bracero. Nisqually Indian Tribe.



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

“How are the salmon doing?” When I tell people I work on salmon recovery, that’s the most common question I get.

For over twenty years, I’ve given a somewhat unsatisfactory answer. I usually say salmon live 3 to 5 years, so it takes years before we can see if recovery efforts are working. I’d be lucky if, by my career’s end, I see signs of progress.

That’s why the story in this newsletter about the resurgence of wild Nisqually Chinook, once thought extinct, is so incredible. When I first learned of their rediscovery, it moved me to tears.

The return of our wild Chinook demonstrates real progress and strengthens our Land Trust’s dedication to salmon recovery through habitat protection and responsible stewardship.

Thank you to all of you who have been on this recovery journey with us. We can say with even greater certainty now that every tree planted, every Scotch broom and blackberry pulled, and every dollar donated to support these ongoing efforts is making a tangible difference for our fish and our community.

Hope to see you out on the river.

Jeanette Dorner
Executive Director



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Thank you to our Newsletter Sponsor

THEY'RE BACK!

Once considered extinct, the mighty native Nisqually Chinook has come roaring back

Twenty-five years ago, when Nisqually Chinook salmon were listed as “threatened” under the federal Endangered Species Act, the consensus among salmon managers was that the historic population had been wiped out by habitat degradation, overfishing, dam construction, and all of the other damaging impacts of the industrialization of the Salish Sea.

Genetic testing showed that the Chinook left in the Nisqually were not native fish – they were actually descended from a Green River hatchery population that had been brought into Nisqually hatcheries.

The true Nisqually Chinook salmon were so large and powerful that comparing them to the Green River stock is like comparing “a wolf to a chihuahua,” says Nisqually Indian Tribe Salmon Recovery Manager Christopher Ellings. And they were presumed to be lost, forever.

But what if they weren't? What if there had been so few native fish left in the system that they simply couldn't be seen? And what if, twenty-five years later, the Nisqually salmon-recovery program had fueled a resurgence of this once-lost species?

It would be an unprecedented success story.



As the watershed's lead entity for salmon recovery, the Nisqually Indian Tribe had developed its Nisqually Chinook Recovery Plan under the premise that native Nisqually Chinook were long since extirpated, but that the Green River stock could re-wild the system with a naturally reproducing population. The first step was to restore habitat throughout the watershed.

To that end, over twenty-five years – five generations of Chinook salmon – the Tribe, the Land Trust, and our many partners have protected and restored tens of thousands of acres of salmon habitat. Permanent protection of shoreline along the main stem of the river alone has grown from 3 percent to 78 percent. It is one of the most ambitious

watershed restoration efforts in the world.

And recently the Tribe made an amazing discovery: *Rebuild it, and they will come back.*

While collecting biological and genetics data to evaluate how Chinook were responding to habitat improvements and management actions, the Tribe's Natural Resources Department and its co-manager, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, were stunned to learn that the true Nisqually Chinook salmon was not extinct at all.

In fact, it had recovered from a time when there were so few fish left that they were essentially hidden to a population of two to three thousand that is highly productive and incredibly diverse.

“The ‘discovery’ of this true wild stock is absolutely remarkable,” said David Troutt, director of the Tribe's Department of Natural Resources. “And the lesson is clear: Habitat restoration in the watershed and harvest changes in the river and Puget Sound have reversed their slide toward extinction.

“Within just five generations they've reasserted themselves as the ‘Kings’ of Nisqually salmon. That is incredible. They represent the most successful salmon-recovery effort in the entire Puget Sound region.”

These Chinook salmon are significantly larger in body size than the hatchery population, have a much longer run time, and use the entire Nisqually River for spawning and rearing.

“There is still much to learn about them, so monitoring and evaluation will need to remain rigorous,” said Christopher Ellings. “But there is also much to be excited about. This is a true turning point away from the era of degradation and loss to one of restoration and recovery, not only of Nisqually Chinook salmon but also of Puget Sound Chinook as a whole.

“The return of our unique Nisqually Chinook salmon gives us tremendous hope.”

Photo Credit: Nisqually Indian Tribe.

Top: Rene Bracero, Nisqually Tribe Natural Resources Technician, holding a rediscovered wild Nisqually Chinook Salmon. Photo by Walker Duval.

Bottom, Left: Nisqually Tribe fishermen Herman “Bucky” Johns and Danny McGee with a Nisqually Chinook. Photo by Walker Duval.

Bottom, Middle: Nisqually Tribe Natural Resources staff take biological samples from spawned Chinook carcasses. Photo by Craig Smith.



OHOP CREEK RESTORATION

Preparation continues for next phase of one of the largest stream restoration projects in the state

Our stewardship team has been busy over the past year removing structures and cleaning up newly acquired properties in the Middle Reach of Ohop Creek. We have acquired 107 additional acres through five projects in the past two years.

Ohop Creek is a top restoration priority for salmon streams in the Nisqually Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan. Our partners at the Nisqually Tribe and South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group are planning a major restoration project along the Middle Reach. We are starting by removing old structures and debris from the streamside and floodplain.

Our Wednesday volunteers contributed almost 200 hours dismantling old structures, salvaging reusable items for Habitat for Humanity, and setting aside materials like fence posts for future use. A Northwest Youth Corps crew helped dismantle and remove a water-diverting structure, restoring spring flow. Tacoma Pump and Drilling assisted in decommissioning an old well to help restore streamflow.

Right, Land Trust Stewardship Technician Javier Mitchell pulls large styrofoam debris from Ohop Creek during a cleanup this summer.

Once volunteers cleared what they could, contractors from J.M. Knellekan Company completed the demolition and cleanup. Items removed included a collapsing two-story, treated-wood treehouse and a fence made of over 70 twelve-foot creosote telephone poles buried six feet underground.

The contractors also used their equipment to help us knock back woody non-native invasive plants on the site, such as blackberries, multiflora rose, and English holly. Then a crew from Zaldivars Forestry Corporation came in afterward to complete the invasive plant treatment. The restoration crew from the Nisqually Tribe's Natural Resources Department has also helped to remove invasive blackberries and uncover additional debris for removal.

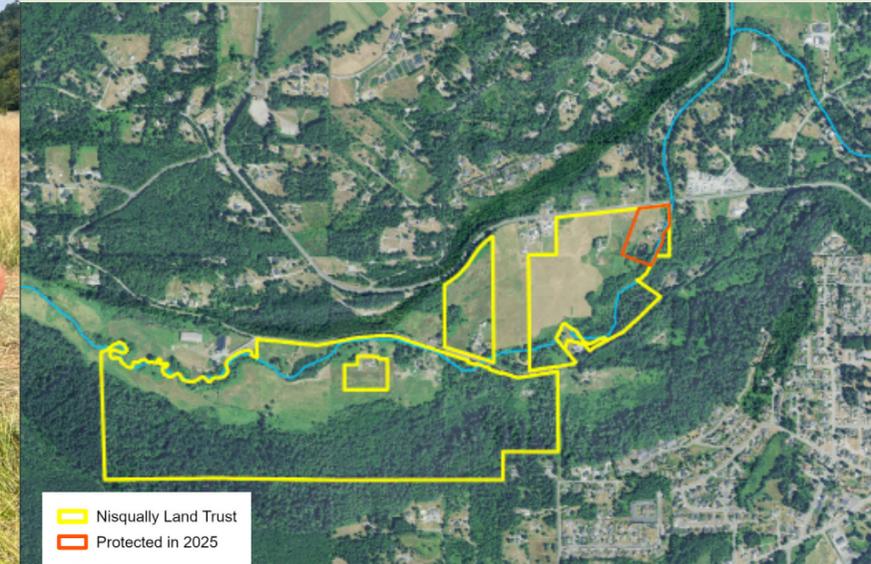
Funding for this work has been from Washington state grants from the Recreation and Conservation Office's Salmon Recovery Funding Board and the Department of Ecology's Streamflow Restoration Grant program.



Above, Land Trust volunteers help clean up debris in Ohop Creek.

Left, contractors J.M. Knellekan Company helped demolish a number of old structures on recently acquired Ohop properties.

More Ohop Spawning Habitat Protected



Newly acquired six acres outlined in red adds to the current block of Land Trust Middle Ohop protected properties in yellow.

The Land Trust is pleased to announce that we have acquired another strategic salmon-shoreline property along Ohop Creek, in the mid-Ohop Valley. This new acquisition is another key property for an ambitious restoration of the creek's salmon-spawning reach now being planned by the Nisqually Indian Tribe and the South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group.

The property totals approximately six acres and contains 530 feet of Ohop Creek shoreline with spawning habitat for Chinook salmon and steelhead trout, both of which are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, as well as coho and pink salmon.

The property is situated in the Ohop Creek floodplain, at the upstream end of our mid-valley block of protected lands, which now totals over two hundred acres and includes over two and a half miles of salmon-producing shoreline.

The property was in foreclosure when the landowner reached out to the Land Trust for help. We used an internal emergency conservation fund to move quickly to purchase the property, at a price slightly below appraised value but sufficient for the landowner to pay off the mortgage and purchase new lodging.

Subsequently, we won a grant to reimburse our acquisition costs through state Climate Commitment Act funding for the Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration program and the Washington Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

“We are so pleased to have added this property in this important spawning reach of Ohop Creek and to make it part of the area available for restoration by our partners,” said Jeanette Dorner, Nisqually Land Trust's Executive Director. “We hope in future years we can bring people out to this property to help us welcome salmon returning to the creek.”



UNIVERSITIES PARTNER IN RESTORATION

Local classes use NLT properties for real-world field studies



UNIVERSITY STUDENTS HELP EVALUATE RESTORATION SITE TO IMPROVE TREE PLANTING SUCCESS

To improve the success of tree planting on our Nisqually River floodplain properties, we have partnered with the University of Washington Tacoma (UWT) and South Puget Sound Community College (SPSCC). Professors and students are investigating environmental factors, tree planting techniques, and collecting data on plant survival to help us improve survival and growth in our forest restoration projects.

For the past two years, UWT Science Professor EC Cline has been bringing their forest ecology and restoration ecology classes out to Land Trust Nisqually River properties, where we have struggled with tree planting survival. In the first year, students collected environmental data. Then they installed a restoration experiment that tested combinations of post-hole augering planting holes, and the addition of compost, biochar, and hydrogel.

In the second year, UWT students returned to evaluate the success of the different combinations and treatments. They determined that the “kitchen sink approach,” which combined all the treatments, had

the greatest success. Based on these results, we then partnered with the Nisqually Tribe’s native plant restoration crew to install a larger 2500 plant planting using the kitchen sink approach. Restoration ecology students will evaluate the performance of this larger planting this fall.

Encouraged by the success of this partnership, we have now begun a second partnership with South Puget Sound Community College. This spring, Biology Professors Leslie Chao and Stephanie Malmgren took their classes to another Nisqually River property to assess the success of tree planting. They have established permanent transects through restoration areas, where they will collect data on plant survival over time. They have also teamed up with SPSCC math professor John Schaub to help students analyze the collected data.

We look forward to utilizing the data that SPSCC students collect and analyze to enhance the success of our restoration plantings. Thanks to the Rose Foundation, University of Washington, and Brian Sullivan for providing funding that helped make this project pos



JOIN US FOR NATURE WALKS & RESTORATION PLANTINGS

OCTOBER

Annual Meeting & Salmon Bake
Sunday, October 5th at 3:30 pm
DuPont, WA

Mashel River Engineered Log Jam Restoration & Salmon Viewing Tour
Friday, October 17th
Eatonville, WA

Tour the final phase of the Mashel River Engineered Log Jam (ELJ) project. Restoration Biologist Kylie ODriscoll from the South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group will lead the tour and talk about the decade-long restoration project to improve habitat for endangered and threatened salmon species.

Salmon Viewing
TBD on Dates and Time
Join the mailing list for alerts.

NOVEMBER

Tree Planting Work Parties
Friday, November 7th at 9 am
Anderson Island

Saturday, November 15th at 9 am
Nisqually Floodplain

Fall Mushroom Walk
Saturday, November 8th

DECEMBER

Tree Planting Work Party
Saturday, December 6th at 9 am
Nisqually Floodplain

Visit our website [nisquallylandtrust.org](https://www.nisquallylandtrust.org) to RSVP and learn more.

Welcome to **Javier Mitchell** who joined the Land Trust in late spring 2025 as a Stewardship Technician. Originally from Oregon, Javier grew up volunteering in his hometown of Tualatin, where he participated in citywide tree plantings, supporting both nonprofit and municipal environmental initiatives. He embraces a philosophy of servant leadership, viewing each opportunity as a way to connect environmentalism with community service and help others develop a deeper appreciation for the natural world.

Before joining the Land Trust, Javier spent a year and a half leading watershed restoration projects along the Oregon Coast with the Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District. He has an Associate of Science degree from Portland Community College, complemented by hands-on field ecology experience in Costa Rica.



This spring, the **Nisqually Community Forest** hired its first **Executive Director, Gifford “Marco” Pinchot IV**. As the great-grandson of Gifford Pinchot—the first Chief of the U.S. Forest Service—Marco has built a career at the intersection of natural-resource management, climate resilience, and community-based conservation.

The Nisqually Community Forest, a subsidiary of the Nisqually Land Trust founded in 2014, co-manages 5,500 acres of timberlands and critical salmon habitat near Mount Rainier National Park with the Nisqually Indian Tribe. NCF’s mission is to acquire and manage working forests in the Nisqually Watershed to provide sustainable economic, environmental, and social benefits to local communities.

Marco said in his new role that he will focus on strengthening partnerships with the Nisqually Tribe and local communities while advancing ecological forestry practices that restore habitat, support local economies, and protect water quality and other ecosystem services. “My vision is rooted in collaboration, long-term stewardship, and honoring the cultural and ecological values of the forest.”



2025 CONSERVATION CELEBRATION & AUCTION

Protecting the lands and waters we love

Land Trust supporters came together in June for our Annual Conservation Celebration and Auction raising their paddles to help permanently protect the region's land, water, fish, and wildlife.

Together, we raised over \$200,000—including \$69,000 for the Forever Fund, which goes directly to the care and stewardship of protected lands.

Throughout the evening we honored the impact of our supporters and partners—individuals, businesses, agencies, and foundations—YOU!

Auctioneer Cindy Schorno and Emcee JW Foster kept the bidding lively, and we were moved by the inspiring story of the rediscovery of wild Nisqually Chinook salmon shared by David Troutt, our watershed partner and Director of Natural Resources for the Nisqually Indian Tribe.

Whether you joined us in person, bid on auction treasures, pledged to the Forever Fund, or gave from afar, your generosity is already making a difference. Thank you!

Mark your calendar for next year's Conservation Celebration & Auction on May 30, 2026.

Thank you to our event in-kind donors: *Cindy Schorno-Fusion Growth Partners, Choro Tomorrow, Eastside Urban Farm & Garden, Hedges Family Estate, Hunter Family Catering, LUV Cookies, Mill Haus Cider Co, Perigee Farm, Top Rung Brewing, and Olympia Framemakers.*
Thanks to our Events Committee Members: *JW Foster, Mary Gentry, Nancy Riordan, Sally Toteff, & Sunny Thompson*

EVENT DONORS

23 Kitchens
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 Alderbrook Resort & Spa
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 Jesse Barham
 Paul & Shirley Battan
 Fawn Bauer & Chuck Young
 Sue Bredensteiner
 CalPortland
 Childhood's End Gallery
 Choro Tomorrow
 Clear Lake Pottery
 Laurie & Art Dolan
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 Fifth Avenue Theater
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 Fleur de Lis Garden Ornamentals
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BOARD TRANSITIONS

Honoring Service, Welcoming a new voice

Craig Davison, who joined the board in 2022, stepped down this year after completing his first three-year term. Craig first connected with the Nisqually River in 1991 when he was stationed at Fort Lewis. Now a Tacoma resident working in fundraising and development, Craig supported the Land Trust as an expression of his passion for conservation. During his time on the Land Trust board, Craig contributed his expertise in communications, marketing, and fundraising as chair of the Development Committee. Craig led with enthusiasm and positive energy, bringing many new supporters into our community. Craig, thank you for your dedication to serving Nisqually Land Trust!

Peggen Frank completed her time on the board earlier this year after serving for four years. Peggen brought a valuable tribal perspective to many board discussions as an enrolled member of the Northern Arapaho Tribe, the wife of former Nisqually Tribe Chairman Willie Frank III, and an active professional advocate for Pacific Northwest tribes, salmon recovery, and treaty rights. We are grateful for the insights and guidance she provided in meaningful board policy discussions. Peggen, thank you for helping strengthen the Land Trust!

Long-time Ashford business owner and resident **Sunny Thompson** recently completed nine years serving on the Nisqually Land Trust board. Sunny brought her passion for protecting the planet to her board service and has been a valued voice for the Nisqually upper watershed community. Everyone has appreciated her kind heart and generous spirit. Sunny plans to stay involved with the organization by volunteering for outreach and fundraising events. Her annual donation of a stay at her Wellspring Spa and Retreat Center remains a popular item at our annual Conservation Dinner Auction. Sunny, thank you for your continued service in our community and for bringing so much heart and passion for protecting the Nisqually watershed!

The Land Trust welcomes new board member **Jake Stillwell**, who joined in May. Jake and his family moved to Olympia in 2022 for the parks, waters, and wildlife. He's an attorney with Olympia, with experience in government, land use, and working with land trusts and affordable housing groups. He joined the board to support conservation and habitat management in the Nisqually River watershed. An avid trail runner, Jake enjoys giving back to the protected lands that let him explore outdoors. Thank you, Jake, for your commitment to our Nisqually watershed community!



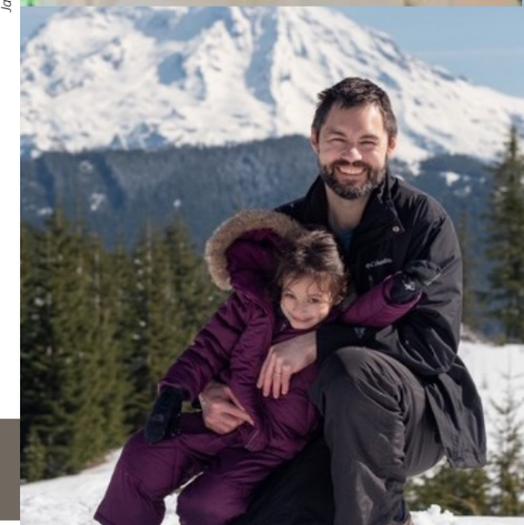
Craig Smith



Peggen Frank



Sunny Thompson



Jake Stillwell



Photography by Tristan Olson.

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WAYS TO GIVE

YOUR GENEROSITY SUSTAINS OUR WORK



Here are a few different ways to give

Monthly Giving Safeguarding the Nisqually watershed depends on steady, reliable support from committed conservation champions like you. Make a monthly gift that strengthens conservation all year long. Join our monthly giving program and your generosity will make a difference when it's needed most. If you would like to commit to a monthly gift you can visit nisquallylandtrust.org/donate to get started.

Donor Advised Funds Manage your charitable giving through an existing giving account. You may recommend a grant by contacting your financial institution or fund manager and letting them know how much you would like to donate. The grant will arrive directly to the Land Trust. Don't forget to direct your institution to provide your donor name so we can recognize your gift. Otherwise it will be anonymous.

Give from your IRA If you're 70 ½ years of age or older, you can make charitable contributions from your traditional or Roth IRA, potentially reducing your taxable income. One essential detail — your plan administrator must issue the check directly to the charity. Consult your plan administrator or your tax advisors for more information about this provision and specific tax advice.

Gifts of Stock It's easy to make a gift of stock to the Land Trust—and there are big benefits to you. A gift of appreciated stock allows you to make a larger contribution than a cash donation; and it might provide you with some tax savings. Find more detailed instructions on our website, nisquallylandtrust.org/how-to-help/donate

Protecting the Nisqually watershed is possible because of you, please don't hesitate to reach out to choose a way to give that is right for you. Have any questions? Call or email Nikki Dizon, at ndizon@nisquallylandtrust.org, or 360-489-3400.

PEOPLE MAKE CONSERVATION HAPPEN

We couldn't do this work alone

Land, Water, Wildlife, People. Our supporters, volunteers and partners are essential to ensuring long-term habitat conservation. We strive to connect people to our protected areas, work closely with local communities, and collaborate with partners.



HELP US STEWARD OUR PROTECTED LANDS

There are many ways to volunteer with the Land Trust – in the field, at the office, and at events. Join us and have a great time with conservation-minded friends.

Become a **FOG (Future Old Growth) Crew member**, join a fun, hard-working group of volunteers in weekly habitat restoration projects throughout the watershed. Plant trees, help with innovative restoration techniques, remove trash and debris from our protected areas, take on invasive plant removal and more. We care for over 6,000 acres of land and need your help.

We meet every Wednesday @ 9:00 am – 12:00 pm. Email volunteer@nisquallylandtrust.org to join the mailing list.

Become a Site Steward. Help us care for our protected lands. "Adopt" a Land Trust property, visit when your schedule allows, and send in photos and reports to our Stewardship Team.

Contact us at volunteer@nisquallylandtrust.org for more information.

CALL FOR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Would you be interested in serving on our board or helping us connect with more people in the community?

We will be releasing a call soon for new folks to apply to become a board member or join one of our engagement committees.

Watch our e-news and website for more information, or reach out to us at staff@nisquallylandtrust.org if you would like us to notify you when the call is released.

Remembering Douglas Canning

by George Walter, Nisqually Land Trust
Founder & Board Member Emeritus

Earlier this year we learned of the passing of Doug Canning. Doug's career at the Washington Department of Ecology included the assignment, some 40 years ago, of staffing the Nisqually River Task Force. This task force was chaired by Karen Fraser, then a Thurston County Commissioner, and it was Doug's assignment to capture discussions in minutes and to draft parts of the plan for future review.

As the behind the scene writer, Doug's work was critical to the eventual approval and adoption of the Nisqually River Management Plan. He was the author of much of the management plan, including the section that recommended creating a land trust, and we all know what remarkable benefits resulted from including this in the plan.

Doug was a Charter Member of the Nisqually Land Trust and a regular financial contributor. I like to imagine him sending in his annual dues and reflecting, "Look what we started all those years ago." And, as a final gesture of support, Doug included the Nisqually Land Trust in his estate planning – becoming one of our initial Nisqually Legacy Partners.

Moving our organization forward depends, more than anything else, on the steady and thoughtful support from folks like Doug Canning. We thank Doug and will always value his contributions.

Bequests like these create a lasting legacy protecting the Nisqually for future generations.

He was an old-fashioned naturalist, a careful observer of animals and plants in their environments. Doug was not an arm-chair expert, you could encounter him in his sea kayak or on long mountain treks.

- Tim Gates, Senior Planner WA Department of Ecology

Doug was instrumental in launching early studies of the environmental impacts of shoreline armoring and brought a level of scientific and analytical rigor that hadn't been applied before. He was a fastidious observer of the natural world.

- Hugh Shipman, retired WA Ecology Coastal Geologist

JOIN OUR NISQUALLY LEGACY PARTNERS

Because so much of the Nisqually Land Trust's work is about ensuring that the places we save today will be protected forever, legacy gifts – gifts left to us in estate plans by visionary donors – are indispensable. There is no better way to continue to make a permanent difference in land conservation.

Including Nisqually Land Trust in your estate plans is an impactful way to leave a legacy of your own that will benefit the nature of our region for generations to come. You can allocate any amount, percentage, or the remainder of your estate or other assets to Nisqually Land Trust through your will or revocable living trust.

How to Make a Bequest

1. Start by getting advice from your estate planning attorney and tax advisor.

2. Copy and paste the sample language found at: nisquallylandtrust.org/legacy-giving. Using our template, work with your financial advisor or estate planning attorney to customize the gift and language.

3. If you include Nisqually Land Trust in your plans, please include the below information to help with our records:

Legal Name: Nisqually Land Trust
Federal Tax ID Number: 91-1484518

Contact us for more detailed instructions.

Your interest in a Planned Gift is held in confidence. However, if you allow us to acknowledge you by name, it can inspire others to join our mission.

We'd love to sit down with you and share more. Please reach out to Executive Director, Jeanette Dorner at: jeanette@nisquallylandtrust.org or 360.489.3400.



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OUR MISSION

Founded in 1989, the Nisqually Land Trust protects and stewards lands to permanently benefit the water, fish, wildlife, and people of the Nisqually River Watershed.

Photo by Roger Andrascik, courtesy of the Nisqually River Council

RECORD PINK SALMON RUNS ARE EXPECTED THIS YEAR, SIGN UP TO BE NOTIFIED OF OUR SALMON VIEWING EVENTS THIS FALL!

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