



# Nisqually River Council

## **Our Mission**

To encourage and support sustainability in the Nisqually watershed in order to steward the resources in perpetuity and build a model for harmonious living.

## **Our Vision for the Future**

We live in a watershed where vibrant communities, a healthy natural environment, and a prosperous, innovative economy are valued.

Our waters, from glacier to sound, run clean and clear, fish and wildlife thrive in our streams, forests, and prairies.

People are drawn to live, work, and play in our rural landscape.

As stewards of our land and water, we value our working farms and forests which protect our natural, cultural, and scenic heritage.

## **Guiding Principles**

We embrace the people who live in the Nisqually watershed, their sense of identity and responsibility that has existed for generations.

We embrace a diverse landscape that can simultaneously support essential ecological functions, viable populations of all native species, economic prosperity, and social well-being.

We value a vibrant local economy that benefits from and values the watershed's resources.

We will use all available and practical tools to plan, measure, and evaluate our progress.

## **Overall Goals**

The overall goals of the Nisqually Watershed Stewardship Plan draw from the council's mission, vision, and guiding principles. They represent the components of sustainability: environment, community, and economy.

### A viable, healthy natural resource base

The natural resources of the Nisqually watershed -- the forests, the fish and wildlife, the water, and the agricultural lands -- co-exist with the community and economy it supports.

The natural resources of the watershed are finite and can easily be spoiled. With the looming pressures of population growth, we must redouble our efforts to leave a legacy of one of the healthiest and unspoiled watersheds in the region.

### A community that is healthy, wealthy, and wise

Communities in this watershed will choose how they will affect their economy and environment. We hope to play a role in keeping these communities healthy so that they can continue to make good decisions. Strong communities require access to good schools, health care, employment, the arts and a livable environment.

### Increased economic productivity in a sustainable manner

A healthy local economy is an integral part of a sustainable Nisqually watershed. The focus of jobs in the Nisqually watershed, like many rural areas, is shifting from traditional resource extraction industries to a new economy. We want our watershed communities to thrive by moving toward industries that can be sustained over the long haul.

### The development of a stewardship ethic

Individual decisions, both big and little, will decide if we become a sustainable watershed. By helping to develop a stewardship ethic through education and incentives, we believe we can influence those decisions.

## **Watershed Governance Changes**

The long history of the Council makes it somewhat difficult to determine the governance changes due to the fact that the Council is an accepted part of the system in the watershed. Issues come before the Council just as a matter of course. However, the Council has created greater collaboration and focus in the watershed and we find that state, local, and tribal governments operate differently here.

## **Ecosystem Benefits**

Benefits of the Council include much greater coordination for salmon recovery projects. Examples include the Nisqually Salmon Habitat Workgroup, the current Nisqually estuary restoration, the work of the Nisqually Land Trust, and the restoration of Ohop creek, among other projects.

## **Stakeholder Benefits**

Benefits to stakeholders in the watershed include direct access to on-the-ground manager. The Coordination has also brought increased funding for watershed projects – bringing money to the community – through the coordination and collaboration of agencies. Overall the benefit has been coordination of preservation, recovery, and enhancement efforts throughout all three sectors – environmental, economic, and community.

## **Challenges**

Challenges include consistent participation by some agencies. Staffing for the Council is critical as is the funding that supports that staffing and the projects that the Council undertakes. There really have been no apparent negative impacts to governments or stakeholders.

## **Pros and Cons of Our Structure**

The Washington State Legislature approved the creation of the Council but gave us no regulatory authority. Therefore we work with voluntary participation in programs and operate through influence and incentives. The current makeup of the Council is tilted heavily towards government agencies.