The Flyway

Winter 2010

Quarterly newsletter of Nisqually and Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuges

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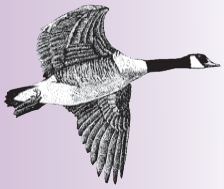
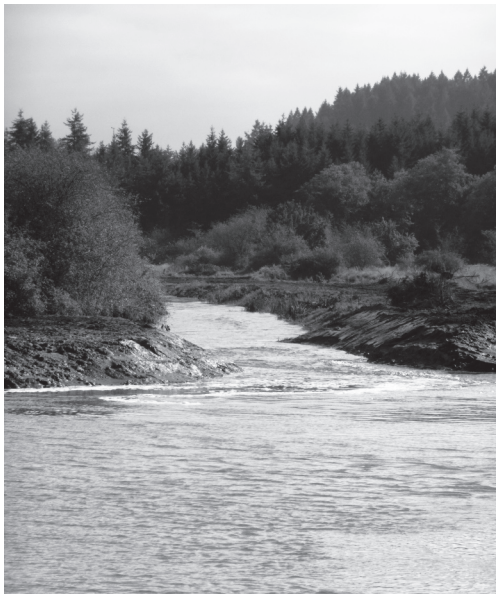


Save the Date!

The 2010 Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival will be held April 30 – May 2 in Hoquiam.

Restoration of the Nisqually Estuary: The Tides Return

The tides returned to part of the Nisqually estuary on September 23rd after an absence of more than 100 years. In the days that followed, several major sloughs were breached, and the last of the old dike was removed on October 5th, restoring full tidal influence to 762 acres of the Nisqually estuary. The first tide was the culmination of more than a decade of planning, design, and construction. This is the largest estuary restoration project in the Pacific Northwest and an important step in recovering Puget Sound. The project has been a partnership between the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, and the Nisqually Indian Tribe. Many other partners also assisted with contributions of financial or technical support.



Site of the first slough reconnection located along McAllister Creek.

This is the largest estuary restoration project in the Pacific Northwest and an important step in recovering Puget Sound.

The reconnection of the restoration site with Puget Sound followed an ambitious construction season. Construction workers employed by Nutter Corporation and directed by Ducks Unlimited worked 18,000 hours to remove dikes, fill the borrow ditch, finish the new exterior dike, and build a riparian restoration site. An engineered logjam was completed in early November along the Nisqually River near the River Overlook. This will help to protect the new, setback exterior dike while providing habitat benefits.

The restoring estuary has begun to change and evolve very rapidly. This process will continue over many years. Freshwater wetland vegetation will be replaced with mudflats and saltmarsh, historic tidal sloughs will reestablish and become more defined, and marine organisms will begin to establish in the restoration area. The Nisqually River has already begun to carve new distributory channels into the restored site, providing fresh water, sediments, and a pathway for fish and wildlife. The extensive construction work was needed to reconnect the restoration site with the Nisqually River and the tides of Puget Sound and restore the natural processes essential to

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The Restoration Celebration

It is rare in today's world that we can celebrate significant positive changes to our natural environment. However, on November 12, a sunny but cold afternoon, over 300 people gathered at the Refuge to recognize just such an event. The Return of the Nisqually Estuary event celebrated the restoration of 762 acres of estuary habitat in the Nisqually delta. After 12 years of planning, the formerly diked habitat was reconnected to the tides of Puget Sound.

The ceremony took place on the new dike overlooking the restoration area and started off with a Nisqually Tribal Drumming Welcome. A pair of bald eagles soared overhead, and a flock of Canada geese noisily flew past, as if to remind us of the significance of the event. Representatives from a number of the project partners spoke about the importance of the project to fish, wildlife, and the health of Puget Sound.

Left to Right, Norm Dicks (6th District), Jean Takekawa (Nisqually Refuge), Cynthia Iyall (Nisqually Indian Tribe), and Tom Dwyer (Ducks Unlimited) cut the ribbon, officially opening the new Nisqually Estuary Trail.

During the ceremony, it was announced that the longest historical tidal slough in the restoration site would be named Leschi Slough, in honor of Chief Leschi of the Nisqually Indian Tribe. The name will be officially registered as a geographic feature in the state of Washington.

As high tide in the estuary approached, Congressman Norm Dicks (6th District), Cynthia Iyall (Tribal Chair, Nisqually Indian Tribe), Tom Dwyer (Conservation Director, Ducks Unlimited Pacific Northwest), and Jean Takekawa (Refuge Manager), cut a ribbon officially opening the new Nisqually Estuary Trail. Visitors then walked for the first time along the half mile trail. They were treated to some wonderful wildlife viewing, such as a pair of short eared owls, and a chance to see the newly restored estuary.

2009 Watershed Festival Poster Contest Results

This year's contest received 98 entries from within the Nisqually River Watershed. Best of Show was awarded to Alex Lagman of Millpond Elementary for his entry entitled *Land of the Bright*.

The judging event was held Friday, July 24 at the Refuge with Jean Takekawa (Nisqually Refuge), Justin Hall (Nisqually River Council), and Dale Thompson (wildlife artist) serving as judges. Within each grade level, judges select a first, second, and third place winner, along with two honorable mentions.

A small awards ceremony was held at the Nisqually Watershed Festival on Saturday, September 26. All 1st place winners received a gift certificate to the Nature Shop located in the Visitor Center.

Alex Lagman's Best of Show winning artwork entitled **Land of the Bright.**

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Save trees, think green

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A New Trail Opens at the Refuge

The Refuge officially opened the new Nisqually Estuary Trail on November 12. This trail starts near the Nisqually River Overlook and travels west for 0.6 miles along the new outer dike and provides an excellent opportunity to view the restoration. High tides can be especially dramatic, showing the influence of the tides and the Nisqually River in shaping the restoring estuary.

Starting at the River Overlook, you can observe the engineered logjam and at high tide, water from the river flows through the swale into the riparian restoration area, providing important freshwater influence. The trail then borders the new riparian area, where tall snags were placed as raptor perches and future use by cavity nesting birds. Native willow and cottonwood stakes are being planted by volunteers and school children to begin the forest restoration process. The trail then passes by the beginning of Leschi Slough, the longest slough in the restored area, and continues west to Shannon Slough. Shannon Slough is one of the largest in the restoration area having a width of 200 feet wide at its mouth that connects to McAllister Creek. To the south of the trail, freshwater ponds are great areas to view waterfowl and other waterbirds.

In April, construction will begin on a portion of the next phase of the Nisqually Estuary Trail. The boardwalk will start where the trail currently ends and travel west toward McAllister Creek. It will then turn north and follow the footprint of the old Brown Farm Dike Trail to the northwest corner of the estuary. The mile long boardwalk will have a tower, photoblind, two large covered platforms, and several push outs along the way. When completed, this unique trail will be four miles round trip from the Visitor Center.

People walking for the first time on the Nisqually Estuary Trail.

The Tides Return

From page 1

sustain an estuary.

Work to be done next year includes the completion of cross levees and enhancements within the 246 acre freshwater wetland area. A native riparian forest will be planted over the next two years in the new riparian area to restore the unique, tidally influenced riparian forest that provides important habitat for fish and songbirds. Monitoring of the restoration will continue, led by U. S. Geological Survey to document the physical and biological response to this large scale restoration. The Nisqually Indian Tribe will begin a post-restoration fish monitoring study in February with the assistance of partners.

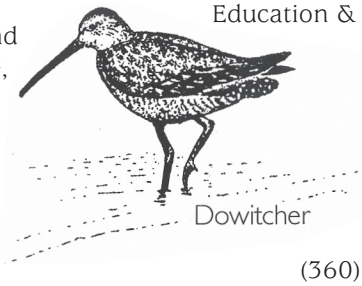
Attention all Kids in Grades K-12: Enter the Junior Duck Stamp Contest!

This waterfowl art contest is open to all children in grades K-12. Artwork is judged within each of the four grade categories (K-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12) with 3-1st place, 3-2nd place, 3-3rd place, and 16 Honorable Mentions awarded in each category. All winners receive certificates, ribbons, and special Junior Duck Stamp winner pins. If interested in entering the contest, check out ***http://www.fws.gov/juniorduck/*** for details and entry applications. The deadline to enter this year's contest is March 15. Feel free to contact Jackie LaRue with any questions at 360-753-9467 or by email at ***jackie_larue@fws.gov.***

Attention All Children Grades 1-6 in Public, Private, and Homeschools in Grays Harbor County:

Enter the 2010 Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival Poster Contest!

The theme for the poster contest is *Local Shorebirds!* (including Dunlin, Plovers, Dowitchers, Sandpipers, and Phalaropes), and entries can be created using any medium with an unmatted/framed size of 12'x18". Artwork will be judged based on accuracy, originality, and artistic skill, and prizes awarded to 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th place winners in each grade. The deadline for this year's contest is April 2. You can mail entries to Shorebird Poster Contest, c/o Port of Grays Harbor, PO Box 660, Aberdeen, WA 98520 or hand deliver them to Port of Grays Harbor, 111 South Wooding St., Aberdeen, WA 98520. First place winning artwork will be used in publicity for the 2011 Shorebird Festival. For questions or entry forms, please contact Carlene Bermann, Education & Outreach Coordinator for Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge at (360)753-9467 or ***carlene_bermann@fws.gov.***



New Environmental Education Center Completed

School groups are now able to utilize the brand new 4200 square foot environmental education building, complete with two classrooms, an orientation room, outdoor amphitheatre, offices, and bathrooms. The new Ed Center also features a larger aquarium exhibit and expanded selection of bird mounts featuring more waterfowl and raptor species for children to examine. As teachers and students enter the building, they are greeted by a beautiful mural painted by local students that highlights the animals and habitats of the Nisqually watershed.

The mural of the watershed and the Blue Goose medallion on the floor enhance the entryway to the new Environmental Education Center.

Building a new environmental education center has been a top priority for the Refuge since the Twin Barns Education Center became unusable from damage it sustained in the 2001 Nisqually earthquake. The new Education Center is a much larger and dynamic setting than its predecessor, so that it will be able to accommodate the Refuge's goal of increasing the number of students utilizing the education program from approximately 5,000 a year to 15,000 annually. The building is only available by reservation for school groups, teacher workshops, and special events.

Staff members test out and model outdoor learning activities for the upcoming Nature Explore Area.

Adjacent to the new Ed Center, construction of the Nature Explore Area will begin this winter. The Nature Explore Area will be an area specially set aside and designed for children to take part in outdoor learning activities. Once the Nature Explore Area is finished, the Refuge hopes to have an official grand opening ceremony celebrating the completion of both facilities.

Partners Fund Two AmeriCorps Positions: Welcome Kate and Carlene!

Two new AmeriCorps members have joined the Nisqually NWRC staff as environmental education coordinators for the 2009-10 school year. These positions were funded by Friends of Nisqually NWR, Grays Harbor Audubon Society, and the Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival.

Kate O'Brien is the new education coordinator for Nisqually Refuge. Kate graduated from St. Thomas University in Minnesota with a Bachelors degree double majoring in Secondary Education and Social Studies. She grew up in Wildwood, Illinois, a suburb of the northern Chicago area. Kate is excited to be in the Pacific Northwest and be near the ocean and its unique ecosystem. As the new environmental educator, she is excited to learn more about the environment and share that knowledge and enthusiasm with students while also working with the wonderful Refuge volunteers. Kate hopes to build up her experience in the environmental education field during her term at Nisqually and continue pursuing environmental education as a career.

Carlene Bermann is the new environmental education coordinator for Grays Harbor Refuge. Carlene graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a degree in Craft/Materials Studies. She grew up in Hampton, Virginia along the Chesapeake Bay. Carlene loves pretty much everything about the Pacific Northwest and was thrilled to see the old-growth forests and take advantage of the abundant hiking and camping opportunities. As the new environmental education coordinator for Grays Harbor, she is excited to explore the fields of education and environmental studies and feels this position is really the perfect opportunity for her to "see what is out there". While she is not completely sure what her future career plans are, she hopes to build her career around art, the environment, and/or education.

Kate and Carlene started in mid-September and will work through the end of July 2010.

Friends of Nisqually NWR is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 1998 to promote conservation of the natural and cultural resources and fund education and outreach programs at **Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge Complex.**

Join Friends Of Nisqually NWRC!

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❏ Please send information on making Friends of Nisqually NWRC a beneficiary of my estate.

❏ Check here to receive an electronic version of *The Flyway* newsletter by email.

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❏ $15 Student/Senior

❏ $25 Individual

❏ $50 Family

❏ $100 Supporting

❏ $250 Partner

❏ $500 Patron

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Corporate/Business Memberships

❏ $250 Business Sponsor

❏ $500 Community Partner

❏ $1000 Sustaining Business

❏ $2500 Corporate Patron

❏ $5000 + Corporate Benefactor

Please make checks payable to: Friends of Nisqually NWRC, 100 Brown Farm Rd, Olympia, WA 98516

Your tax deductible contribution will help preserve the unique habitats, fish, and wildlife of the Nisqually Delta and the Grays Harbor Tideflats.

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Olympia WA 98516

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Planning a Field Trip to Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge?

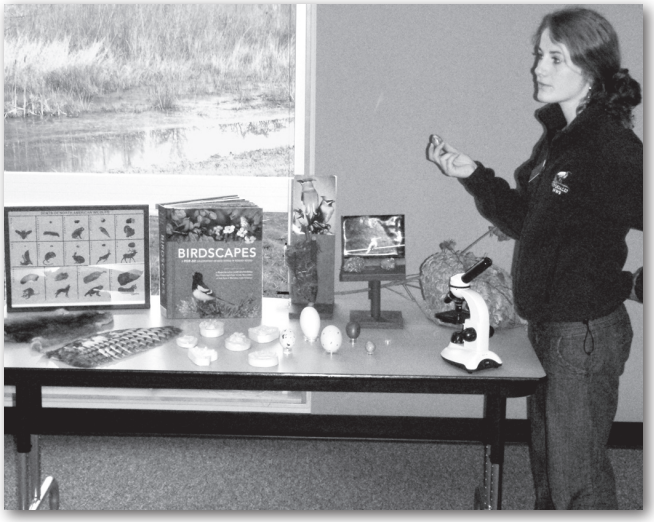
Come see what is new at the Refuge! Attend one of our free teacher trainings to get all the tools you need to confidently guide your students on their own nature adventure. You will experience hands on indoor activities in our brand new education center, hike the latest addition of trails, and view emerging estuarine habitats. Refreshments will be provided.

Chose one workshop to attend:

Saturday, January 23, 9am-1pm
Saturday, February 20, 9am-1pm
Saturday, March 27, 9am-1pm
Wednesday, April 14, 4-8pm

****Each year, from May 15th to June 15th only teachers who have participated in a workshop within the past 2 years are able to schedule a class for their field trip.****

Location: *New* Education Center at the Refuge (Exit 114 off I-5)



Environmental Education Coordinator, Kate O'Brien, explains and demonstrates some of the resources and activities offered at the new Environmental Education Center at Nisqually NWR.

Clock hours are available for a $13 fee, approved by ESD113

To register, download the form at http://www.fws.gov/nisqually/education.htm and fax or mail to the refuge. Please register at least two weeks in advance.

For more information, contact: Kate O'Brien, NNWR Education Coordinator

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