Help Protect
Our Important
Aquatic Ecosystem

The Nisqually Reach
Aquatic Reserve

What is an Aquatic Reserve?
Aquatic Reserves are state-owned aquatic lands of exceptional biodiversity and productivity. Created by Washington’s Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in 2004, the Aquatic Reserve Program brings together local and state governments, non-governmental organizations, Tribes, and citizens interested in preserving and restoring these ecologically important areas.

To date, seven areas have been designated Aquatic Reserves in Washington, all within the Puget Sound region. The designation encourages public participation and engagement, which helps to preserve the environmental, scientific, and educational value of these public lands while maintaining the ability of individuals to fish, boat, and recreate in these areas. To learn more visit http://www.dnr.wa.gov and search for the Aquatic Reserve Program.

Nisqually Reach Aquatic Reserve

To increase public participation in the Aquatic Reserve process, two collaborating Nisqually Reach Citizen Stewardship Committees were created; one on Anderson Island and one on the mainland. Funded by a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency and passed down through the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Department of Natural Resources (DNR), these committees work with DNR’s Aquatic Reserve program to implement management actions at the Reserve.

Opportunities for involvement include...

Learn about the Reserve: Committee members offer free presentations about the Aquatic Reserve to community groups and classrooms.

Education Projects: Do you have graphic design or writing skills? Help us design interpretive signs to enhance opportunities for Reserve visitors to learn about the area’s ecological significance. Do you have other education ideas? Come share them at our next meeting!

Citizen Science Projects: Citizen Scientists receive classroom and field training and contribute to research within the Reserve. They provide valuable support for the agencies managing the existing public lands. Volunteers are currently assisting DNR with shoreline sampling to identify forage fish spawning areas. Many species rely on these small fish for food, including the pigeon guillemot, a seabird whose nesting sites we hope to survey soon. In addition, we plan to conduct a survey of how the public uses Reserve areas.

Regulatory review projects: Another committee project tracks proposed developments, permits, and other regulatory activities that may affect the Reserve’s shorelines and habitats. After tracking, the committee provides recommendations to appropriate regulatory bodies as needed. This could include mapping and reporting marine debris or submitting formal comments on a proposed project.

Contact Daniel Hull at NRNC@nisquallyestuary.org to request a presentation, learn more about the committee, and for more information about our projects!

Interested in protecting the Nisqually Reach Aquatic Reserve?
Join the Nisqually Reach Citizen Stewardship Committee!

Let your voice be heard! Become an advocate for the Nisqually Reach Aquatic Reserve! For more information contact:
Daniel Hull - nrnc@nisquallyestuary.org - 360-459-0387 (mainland) or Sarah Garmire - sgarmire@centurytel.net - 253-884-6976 (Anderson Island)

Photo credit: NRNC
What makes our Nisqually Reach Aquatic Reserve so special?

### Important Habitats
- Aerial view of Anderson Island looking North.
- Extensive mudflats and an exposed eelgrass bed during a low tide.
- Sand lance, a species of forage fish, preparing to spawn.
- A pigeon guillemot takes time to call to its companion.
- Adult Chinook salmon travel through the Reserve back to the spawning grounds in the Nisqually River every year.
- Eagle Island, an important seal haul out and breeding site in South Puget Sound.

The Nisqually Reach Aquatic Reserve’s important and productive habitat includes:
- Nursery, feeding, and refuge areas for migrating, nesting, and foraging birds, fish, and marine mammals.
- Nutrient rich and diverse types of shallow, deep, and open water habitats.
- Stretches of minimally disturbed beaches, bluffs, riparian zones, and submerged vegetation such as eelgrass.

### Diversity of Wildlife
- Over 220 species of birds have been sighted at the Reach. Shorelines along the Reserve provide nesting, breeding, feeding, and resting grounds for these species. This essential habitat in Nisqually Reach and Delta led to their recognition as Audubon Important Bird Areas.
- Two species of forage fish—sand lance and surf smelt—use the beaches along the edges of the Reserve as spawning grounds. Forage fish are a critically important food source for marine birds, salmon, and other large marine predators.

### Threats Facing Our Reserve
- Pollution—Have you seen the numerous outflow pipes pouring untreated water into Puget Sound? Pollution is a very serious threat to Puget Sound's future health. Scientists and citizens alike have major concerns about the increase in plastic found in the stomachs of dead animals, the amount of toxins entering the Sound from polluted stormwater runoff, and the dead zones created by excess nutrients entering the Sound. We must reduce the amount of pollution entering our water to ensure a healthy Puget Sound for future generations to enjoy. Join the Citizen Stewardship Committee and help to ensure Nisqually Reach remains a safe and healthy place for families to recreate and enjoy.
- Shoreline Development—Development along the shoreline, whether buildings, seawalls or piers, affects the health of that shoreline. Many shorelines within the Reserve are modified, which results in reduced habitat for forage fish spawning, salmon rearing, feeding, and migration. Development also causes significant loss of beach vegetation, which helps keep temperatures favorable to animal and plant life. Help the Citizen Stewardship Committee raise awareness about shoreline development in the Reserve and leave Nisqually Reach in better shape than we found it!