



**NRC Citizens Advisory Committee
Meeting Agenda
January 9, 6:00 – 8:00 PM
Nisqually Tribe Natural Resource Office**

Present:

Bill Van Buskirk, City of Yelm
Phyllis Farrell, chair
Ed Kenney
Howard Glastetter
Glen Thomas

Jeaniel Thomas
Lois Ward
Fred Michelson
Grace Ann Byrd
Emily McCartan, staff

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Phyllis called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

2. Yelm Sewer System Update - *Bill Van Buskirk, City of Yelm*

CAC was involved in Yelm's initial sewer process in 1990s. Bill presented to the CAC last year, shortly after coming on board, about plans to improve operations and to address CAC concerns about discharge into the river. He was invited back today to give an update. Yelm is still working on the facility plan. Got City council approval for phase 1 (had to up rates 9%, which was a big deal in the community, will raise \$400,000) to fund facility plan to deal with neglected maintenance. Equalization basins had no drains, so they were building up sludge. Bill has started installing drains. Reuse SKID for customers this summer. Sludge gets hauled to Webb Hill in Mason County. City has a contract with Flo-Hawks to haul sludge, thicken it, can send up to 5% to Tacoma to their effluent stream. Really greasy sludge has to be hauled to Wenatchee. Normal maintenance goes to Webb Hill.

New facility should break ground in spring of 2018, couple months for immediate upgrades. Also upgrading to new, badly needed computer system. Producing Class A water now, but only used at wastewater plant currently. Getting the plant back into 21st century after 20 years deferred maintenance. When Bill came onboard 18 months ago, he heavily edited the existing facility plan to address studies that weren't showing results. Bill came from Mason County, and has been working in wastewater for 30 years.

Phyllis - Ed, Lois and I went out to plant, talked with city councilmembers and Mayor JW Foster. There was evidence that at times there was discharge into the river. Has that lessened now?

Bill - Can't speak for what happened before he got there (they had over a year without a manager, which is challenging). He worked very strictly with Dept of Ecology to get their expertise and to get agreement on what he's doing.

Fred - any acknowledgement in the permit that we're coming up to speed?

Bill - Permit is expired right now. Ecology is updating it. They want to wait until the mechanical changes we're making have come through. Requested they remove some items that aren't best practices (automated turbidometer causes problems, and turbidity not a significant issue at this facility, so took it offline and asked Ecology to take it out of the permit.) 350,000 gal/day discharged into the canal. Discharge only goes directly into river when they're cleaning the canal in August/Sept. At that point water is clean enough to go into the river (not potable, but clean for irrigation). Not enough customers in the winter for irrigation water. Current customers are the high school and churches (can't supply the golf course, because it would take over 100% of the water they produce). There is a storage tank, 500,000 gallons. Use it in the summer time when all the customers are drawing irrigation. Rain events don't impact this facility. No inflow infiltration.

Phyllis - What other communities have municipal treatment facilities on the Nisqually?

Bill - Eatonville on the Mashel, National Park (has had some problems, very hard to manage that system because usage varies from 1000s of people/day to 20). Tons of septic waste goes into Puget Sound from Seattle (failures, within permit limits), more than entire Yelm load.

Grace - Tribe has concerns about discharge affecting shellfish (outside the Nisqually watershed, but on the shellfish flats).

Phyllis - Do we know the combined discharge going into Puget Sound?

Fred - Ecology has maps. Nutrients coming out of wastewater plants and tributaries change the chemistry of the Sound, can't really overcome that.

Bill - Stream of pharmaceuticals and caffeine goes from Puget Sound out into the ocean. Treatment plants don't really deal with pharmaceuticals - not a big deal in Yelm with no big hospital, but an issue generally.

Lois - If the water that we're putting into the rivers isn't drinkable for humans, why is it good enough for fish/wildlife?

Bill - Any treatment is way better than no treatment. 1% of Earth's water is drinking water and we're burning through it, so the more clean water we can create, the better off we are. Population is the challenge. Water conservation should be much better.

Ed - Dilemma is we have to have water that goes into river at a certain level, but requirements from Dept. of Health for putting water in the ground are very stringent, which forces you to put it in the river.

Bill - Yelm does mostly above-ground distribution. Would need 150 acres of spray field to handle the load that Mason County is capable of, for example.

Allie - Could you build new wetlands?

Bill - Working with existing parks, which carry water and are under my jurisdiction. Doing a lot of replumbing at parks. Takes a lot of money to maintain parks and wetlands (cattails taking over can perforate liners - issue at Cochran park).

Phyllis - Bills in Legislature to label food grown with sludge. Heavy metals, toxics.

Bill - Permits set guidelines limiting metals. Don't have much industry in Yelm discharging big toxics. Past hits on copper and zinc are from peoples' homes, and relying on homeowners to get samples yields not very reliable data.

Ed - Recall that last summer, the problem was water didn't meet class A standards right at the time when it was going into the river because canal was closed. Seems like we're going the right direction. Producing Class A now and expect to be able to continue?

Bill - Yes. Got facility plan approved, but have to keep processing while we make the upgrades. EQs have a lot of work to be done. Will decommission the big one because we do nothing but

maintain it and don't use it. Putting drains in the small one to make it functional, But have to use the big one while we're reconstructing the small one. Yelm just approved a 62-lot housing development. Still have about 240 permits available, under Foster decision. When Bill got there, they were making what should be a biological process into a very chemical-heavy one. Better off with the challenges of a biological process than with a chemical one.

3. CAC Member Goals

Alder Dam (Howard)

- Lake St. Clair has been rising since then Olympia moved water source to McAllister. Suspect gravity is feeding increased spring flow back into the lake. Would be interesting to know what that's about.
- Fred: Wanted to point out at last NRC meeting that every foot above 1197 is worth 1000cfs. If you're at 1205' and get a streak of rain events, you won't have any room.
- Howard shared his county correspondence notes on Alder Dam. NOAA produces a graph that goes to 1214 ft, which suggests there is room above 1207. Howard asked them to put in a red line at 1207', which they did. TPU keeps saying they have no flood control responsibilities when I ask for 1197'. Other dams do more wintertime adjusting. Have talked to Commissioner Edwards and Tacoma Power, both noncommittal. Would like to see a map of the spillway and gorges at the dam so we can see how it fits together. In 2006, there was no downstream flooding below the dam, but dam rose 37 feet in 18 hours, shows risks of keeping it high. FEMA's plans to model flood plains for Nisqually are as if the dam does not exist, because TPU has no legal responsibility for flood control.
- Phyllis: For NRC meeting, how would you like me to report this? That we discussed this and still have concerns about flood risk?
- Howard: I'd like that said. I feel that it's getting brushed off.
- Phyllis: Sounds like it may take a major flood for the counties to put some leverage on TPU to adopt a philosophy of flood control as well as power generation.

Thurston RAP study (Howard)

- Process to evaluate recycled asphalt pavement in Nisqually, including Holroyd gravel mine (with asphalt pit that planning commissioners recommended against, per subarea plan)
- Plant got in, but not allowed to do RAP as part of that process. Currently getting ready to be evaluated.
- County is about to award the contract to evaluate. David Troutt was on selection community. Only applicant, but looks like a good company.
- RAP is a concern because you can get a lot more pollution off of ground up asphalt than new. It was put in subarea plan for that concern.

Net Pens update (Phyllis)

- Last spring, Lois and Phyllis attended conference with presentations from environmental groups with concerns. WA is the only state on west coast that allows net pens. There are 8 Atlantic salmon net pen facilities in Puget Sound. This summer, one pen (Cook Aquaculture) broke and released 750,000 fish. Recovered all but about 100,000. Event has precipitated a bunch of legislation to ban/study/phase out these contracts. Cooke's pens were in need of maintenance when they bought them a few years ago. Phyllis has heard their side of the story - probably a good company, but nevertheless, all these fish were let loose. Concerns are

disease, viruses, releases competing with native fish, sea lice, pollution with dumping food pellets. Commissioner Franz cancelled the permit of a company in Port Angeles because of maintenance issues and drift out of permit area. Company is suing the state. Cooke made good-faith effort to catch the escapees, paid people for trade-ins (paid out several million), hired Lummi fishermen to catch. They say the fish were 2-3 years old, not sexually mature, no problem with competing or reproducing. However, some found in rivers including Nisqually, some studies showing they do reproduce (probably jacks).

- 3 bills on Phyllis's radar:
 - Ranker (SB 6086): Favored by environmental groups and tribes.
 - MacEwen (HB 2260): would ban Atlantic salmon farming in marine waters (probably illegal because companies have contracts)
 - Lytton (HB 2418, HB 2957): study issue, delay construction until further information is gathered

Conservation Futures Funds (Phyllis)

- County has proposed using CFF to help address Habitat Conservation Plan for gopher mitigation.
- At December briefing on HCP, instructed staff to pursue all funding options, including increasing tax.

Manke Powell Creek property (Ed)

- Not much to report, no significant changes since last meeting. Ed, Morgan, and Craig walked whole area last year. No spawning gravel in Nisqually Trust property, but it's an avenue to get to spawning gravel in Manke property. Saw successful spawning last year. Concern with Manke that they don't seem to understand the rules about 200-ft buffer in active spawning area (rather than 50/100ft). Want to walk it with Kellen Manke to go over this and try to come to an understanding. Community members also still trying to find someone to buy it.

4. **General Updates**

Water/Hirst Bills (Phyllis)

- One out of committee would undermine Hirst and Foster. Doesn't address that WRIAs don't have instream flow rules and would be exempt from regulations. Allows for out of kind mitigation, which doesn't put water back into the system.
- Tribes are supporting SB 6316. Billy Frank III testified for that along with 12 leaders from Eastern WA, MT, Tulalip, others. Would require metering of new permits, fees on new exempt well permits, and watershed restoration accounts to protect instream flows. Not looking good. Lot of pressure from developers and businesses against it.
- George's position was Nisqually tribe doesn't believe our rural wells are impacting the Nisqually. Tribe's position is that other watersheds may be impacted.
- The capital budget (with salmon recovery funding) is held up until a water bill is passed.

5. **For the Good of the Order**

- Ed: happy they haven't introduced any steelhead hatcheries on the Nisqually. Last year in the Olympics saw big difference between hatchery and native fish in terms of their size and fight.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05.