

**NRC Citizens Advisory Committee  
Meeting Agenda  
January 8, 2019, 6:00 – 8:00 PM  
Nisqually Tribe Natural Resource Office**

**Present:** Phyllis Farrell, Lois Ward, Marjorie Smith, Robert Smith, Howard Glastetter, Fred Michelson, Karelina Resnick, Emily McCartan (staff)

**1. Call to Order and Introductions**

Phyllis called the meeting to order at 6:25.

**2. WRIA 11 update**

Emily briefed members on the draft Nisqually Watershed Plan Addendum addressing new permit-exempt wells and mitigation for streamflow impacts. The draft is in review with Planning Unit members, with comments due on Friday and a vote to approve scheduled on Jan. 16. Lois represents the NRC CAC on the Planning Unit and noted that the legislation under which this Addendum is drafted does not address the vast majority of water use, including small water systems and industrial uses. It covers only new permit-exempt domestic wells, which represents a very a small fraction of total water use. The Planning Unit could request that Ecology change the maximum withdrawal allowed from permit-exempt wells (currently 3,000gpd for the Nisqually) to some lower amount. That option is on the table but the Planning Unit has not decided whether to pursue it. The underlying legislation (ESSB 6091) selected Nisqually and Nooksack WRIs to go first, with a one-year planning deadline, compared to other watersheds which have three years. It's not clear why this was done.

**3. Fire Mountain Farms Biosolids Application**

Fire Mountain Farms has applied for a permit with the Department of Ecology to spread biosolids (from wastewater/sewage treatment facilities) as fertilizer on a property in the Bald Hills outside of Yelm, adjacent to the Nisqually River. Phyllis was notified of this issue by a citizen watchdog who monitors sewage sludge issues. A public meeting is scheduled on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 6pm, at the Yelm Senior Center. Ed is working with other residents to mobilize citizen opposition. The Nisqually Tribe has also expressed concerns and reached out to Ecology. There are concerns about FMF's past behavior regarding security as well as treatment of waste, and whether this means potential clandestine dumping of industrial waste. Comments are due to Ecology by January 29. Ecology has already issued a blanket Determination of Non-Significance, so they would need to revoke it to call for an Environmental Impact Statement. Ecology has fewer staff now than are needed to carry out the job, so they do far fewer site visits. Howard noted potential dangers from runoff to the shellfish farms among other things. CAC members would like to know what the contents of the sludge are, and how it will be monitored and secured if permitted to ensure it's free of toxics.

**4. Tacoma Power Update:**

Howard shared a chart showing that the reservoir reached its lowest level ever in October this year. TPU has now raised the level to just over 1,180 feet, which was their goal. They plan to go back to their normal outflow soon. They are still 23 feet below capacity, which is as low as Howard has ever seen it during the winter. He feels this was well-handled for a drought situation, and he would like to see them be as responsive regarding flood events. Howard has been selected to serve on the Nisqually Sub-Area plan update and he plans to press for TPU to be involved.

**5. Tulalip Tribe Beaver Introduction**

Lois shared a “good news” story about the use of beavers as a tool for floodplain and water storage. It’s a useful ecosystem function and people are recognizing them as helpers, not nuisances. Beavers are being introduced high up in river systems, including by the Tulalip Tribe in the Skykomish. They discovered that there was a law on the books prohibiting releasing beavers west of the Cascades; that has since been changed to allow this work to happen. Although sometimes beavers can negatively impact fish habitat, there are techniques for encouraging them to stay in the areas where they want them, by building “beaver dam analogs” to give them a starter kit. The article is here: <https://www.hcn.org/articles/wildlife-the-tulalip-tribes-bet-big-on-beavers>

**6. Manke NLT Grant Update**

Ecology is expected to announce grant recipients soon for the first round of streamflow restoration funds, including the Land Trust’s application to purchase the Manke Bald Hills property.

**7. Mineral lands**

Thurston County decided not to include land trust lands as parks for the 1,000 foot buffer for potential mining lands. Joe indicated that because so many of NLT lands are along the river, they are protected by shoreline buffer rules. Capital Land Trust is more likely to be severely impacted. Not great news. The GMA clearly states that conservation areas and habitat protection are considered critical areas, but the rationale is that land trust properties are not government owned and the maps would change too frequently. So do gravel mines! The new language will greatly expand the co-designated land. The problem is that you will now have to contest every individual permit application, which is very burdensome to the public. Hope to learn from the Pierce County experience with the Eatonville gravel mines close to schools and salmon-bearing streams.

**7. Staff Report**

Emily reported on the impact the federal government shutdown is having on NRC agencies and priorities. The Nisqually Tribe’s salmon recovery work is currently able to proceed, but there are concerns about the length of the shutdown and setbacks on federal data collection and other projects. The River Council schedule for 2019 is not yet finalized because of closures at the Refuge and Mount Rainier National Park. The NRF

may be moving to a new location if the Natural Resources department transitions to new office space, currently under discussion.

**8. For the good of the order:**

Residents were notified regarding an application for a 3.5 acre geoduck farm on Tolmie Reach, recently approved by Thurston County.

LOTT Wet Science Center in Olympia is hosting a mason bee block workshop on Saturday.

Article in the Nisqually Valley News about plans to remove a culvert that is blocking fish passage at Piessner Road, and replace it with one that fish can get through.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.