

**NRC CAC Meeting**  
**February 11, 2020**  
**Nisqually Natural Resources Office**  
**6:30-8:00pm**

**Present:** Phyllis Farrell, Paula Holroyde, Howard Glastetter, Lois Ward, Bob Smith, Marjorie Smith, Fred Michelson, Emily McCartan (staff)

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Phyllis called the meeting to order at 6:31.

**2. Issue Updates**

*Biosolids*

A bill on biosolids has been proposed in the Legislature, but has not yet advanced to a hearing. Ed is working with the Sierra Club on a strategy. There is increasing news coverage and awareness nationwide. Phyllis suggested to the Thurston County Voluntary Stewardship Program that it is something to educate landowners about. Bellingham is implementing a thermal reduction process to treat biosolids, which is used in Europe in some areas but is very expensive. Fred noted several items he would hope to see addressed in a new general permit, and suggested that the NRC should prepare a detailed draft comment letter now, in case Ecology runs another very short comment period as they did this time. CAC members may send Emily suggestions for inclusion in the new general permit to contribute to a draft letter.

*Flood and Alder Dam Management*

Howard spoke earlier tonight to the Thurston Board of County Commissioners about his concerns as a resident of the lower Nisqually Valley floodplain.

Commissioner Edwards indicated to Howard that the Board may submit a complaint to the utility board in Tacoma regarding the February 7 flood. He shared handouts from the meeting showing graphs of projected and actual inflows and reservoir levels leading up to and during the storm from February 5-7. Howard believes that increasing the outflow to 12,000 cfs several days earlier would have created enough room in the reservoir to reduce the flooding that occurred the lower valley. On February 8, after the storm was over, the reservoir height was at 1,205 feet, which Howard feels continues to run a dangerous risk of future flooding. Howard has submitted comments to Thurston County and FERC. The CAC previously proposed that TPU maintain a 10-foot margin from the full height of Alder Dam during the winter. Bob stated he believes that is about half the volume of the reservoir.

Marjorie noted that in previous years, Thurston County called homeowners along the river to notify them. That did not happen this year, so people who were not signed up for emergency alert emails did not receive any warning that this was happening.

Lois proposed a tour of the inundated sites in the floodplain led by Howard. Members would like to arrange that for sometime in the spring.

Phyllis noted that the CAC's function is to raise issues of concern to the NRC. There are both human and habitat concerns in play with the Alder Dam management. Fred noted that scientists studying the Delta have expressed at River Council that the Nisqually Delta is sediment-deficient due to Alder Dam. He observes water with visible sediment coming into the Delta and Reach in Puget Sound on a regular basis. Scientists with the Tribe and USGS have done significant research on sediment accumulation, which indicates the historical levels were much higher.

The CAC suggested the following questions to raise at the Nisqually River Council:

- What is the impact on salmon habitat?
- How does the County address emergency flood management and notifications, and what changes are needed based on this event?

Fred moved that Howard draft a letter to the NRC, requesting that the NRC ask TPU to lower the wintertime level of the dam. The motion was seconded. Members discussed how to bring these concerns to the NRC while allowing space for discussion, consultation with experts, and consensus. Leaving the reservoir lower during the winter could reduce the amount of water available for summertime flows for salmon, (minimum flows have not been met for the last several years). Some members feel that the central issue is understanding the management decisions TPU makes based on forecasts and monitoring data. Other dams have flood control responsibility in their FERC license, but Alder Dam does not. Official documentation can help create a paper trail when the license is up for renewal, or if there is a major incident. The motion was amended such that Phyllis will summarize the CAC's concerns and Howard's letters in her report to the NRC, and ask that the NRC discuss the effects of Alder Dam management on habitat and valley residents. The amended motion carried.

#### *Legislative Issue Update*

Most of the major bills being monitored by the statewide environmental groups have made it out of committee, including on topics of orca and salmon recovery, net environmental gain, clean fuel, plastic bag ban, and pollution limits. The CAC would like to hear what the Tribe's legislative priorities are for this session.

### **3. For the Good of the Order**

Emily will re-distribute the list of CAC member emails and phone numbers. Her emails are sent through a software program that doesn't show everyone's email to other recipients.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04pm.