



**NRC Citizens Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 13, 6:00 – 8:00 PM
Nisqually Tribe Natural Resource Office**

Present:

Lois Ward (acting chair)

Howard Glastetter

Fred Michelson

Emily McCartan, staff

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Lois called the meeting to order at 6:08pm. Phyllis has a conflict this evening and communicated several items to Lois and Emily for discussion.

2. CAC History and Officer Selection

Phyllis has been serving as chair for over two years, and asked via email for an update on the normal timing and process for officer elections. The group reviewed the CAC Organizational Structure outlined in the 2011 NWSP Plan (there are no formal bylaws). Fred was involved in drafting the 2011 Plan and recalled discussions about various ways to organize the group. The CAC elects a chair annually. The CAC chair is part of the NRC executive committee and the CAC has 3 voting members in the NRC proper. Fred noted that there were times in the past when CAC's votes were important because of contentious issues – today the NRC tends to take fewer formal votes and operates more by consensus. Lois pointed out an issue several months ago when she and Phyllis raised concerns about RAP, and voted not to support the position the NRC was taking. That brought about further explanation and discussion at the NW Trek Meeting (March 2017). It wasn't contentious by any means, but wanted it to be more of a focus of attention. Fred recalled that, in the original plan, the NRC could ask CAC to take on certain things, but it wasn't going the other way. Fred was one of the people who pushed for a mechanism for the CAC to request the NRC take action, especially in response to issues that citizens brought up at various times (contentious gravel mining issue, Ft. Lewis wastewater treatment plant, etc). An additional goal was to make sure citizens in the NRC had a place for our concerns to be heard and a way to express perspectives on issues that might differ from NIT, counties, or other agencies.

Fred and others noted that membership has been a consistent challenge. It's a difficult commitment for people to maintain. It hasn't been a major goal to go out and recruit members on a regular basis. Fred used to table at community events occasionally. At one point the CAC had about 15 regular members. At present (not counting this meeting), about 8-10 people come with some regularity. Lois noted that another challenge is that so many groups exist advocating for similar things. There are still many ways people are engaging with the watershed (NLT, Stream Stewards, NREP). Howard suggested putting recruitment announcements in newsletters circulated by the Tribe, counties, and others.

May want to do some Twitter/Facebook advertising as well. Lois suggested tackling a publicity campaign via Nisqually Valley News and other outlets, and sending out reminders to old members. Might want to have a CAC member (or several) listed as a point of contact for interested people to talk to about it.

Emily said that normally, elections would be in May/June (nominations in May, elections in June, installed for July NRC retreat). She will email current active CAC members with a reminder about that, and go forward with that regular process.

3. Alder Dam Water Levels

Howard shared data on Alder Lake Reservoir's levels over recent weather events. He feels that neither county seems to have much interest in protecting the lower valley from flooding. Tacoma Power is insulated from criticism and neither county is interested in giving it. Fred noted that the Nisqually Tribe has a strong relationship with TPU on stream levels to protect salmon.

Per Howard's records, at the end of January Alder Lake Reservoir was raised to 1205', 2 feet below capacity, which he views as a dangerous level. It remained there for 3 days (Jan. 31-Feb. 2) with a predicted storm coming in with inflow of 10,000 cfs or higher around Feb. 5. TPU took some evasive action to drop the reservoir to 1204', still higher than Howard believes is safe, before the storm turned north at the last minute and inflow projections dropped. Howard emailed Gary Edwards and suggested he go take a look, but don't know if he did so. Howard noted that the highest paid people in the City of Tacoma are at Tacoma Power, and they manage the dam for profit margins at high water levels. He thinks that with some care they could lose minimal generation and be a lot safe. Lois stated that whether we like it or not, their mandate is not for flood control. Howard has spoken with Andrew Kinney with Thurston County emergency management, and per his report, FEMA flood plans for the lower valley function as though the dam doesn't exist, because TPU does not have responsibility to use it for flood control. To Howard, that's not the way it should be done. It should make more sense to have a margin of safety with a lower water level than to have to dump during an event.

Fred suggested that, as an action item, the CAC ask the NRC to submit a letter describing what we have learned through Howard's work (and Florian's presentation, which we appreciate), and requesting lower levels for safety between November and February. It was agreed that Howard will write the letter and Emily will send it around to the CAC for feedback. If approved by the CAC, we would bring it to the NRC meeting in March or April.

4. Updates

Manke Powell Creek Property – Emily reported updates that Ariona emailed to her. A "Friends of Powell Creek" group has been meeting and assigning tasks. Ed Kenney and Ariona are both involved. Ariona is reaching out to DNR and attempting to coordinate a meeting with the community group, Manke, the Tribe, and Land Trust. They hope to schedule a walk through of the forest with Manke to examine the buffer zone. A community petition for sustainability has also been proposed.

Conservation Futures – the NRC approved and sent the letter opposing the use of CF for habitat mitigation purchases at the January 19 meeting. Emily spoke with Andy Deffobis in the County Planner's office this week to get a status report on the Habitat Conservation Plan and CF, and he confirmed that there are no final decisions or scheduled deadlines at this point. The draft HCP is in a holding pattern waiting for the Commissioners to start a formal review process, including public comment opportunities, and CF is basically also on hold until that starts moving forward. One of Andy's colleagues is going to be at this Friday's NRC meeting to give a (brief) update and answer questions, and it sounds like county staff are also in conversation with the land trusts about what various paths forward might mean for them.

Net pens – the Tribe has been monitoring for Atlantic salmon closely through their fishery and survey programs, and is engaged with the state and other Tribes as well. David usually provides an update on this during his report to the NRC and can give us the latest. Lois noted that there are pollution concerns even from tribal net pens, and that may be a topic of future discussion, but probably not one the NRC or CAC will take a large role in.

Orcas – Emily has not come across a firm timeline for rolling out the Governor's proposed task force on orca recovery, but David has been involved in those discussions. Lois expressed a fear that it is too little, too late with orcas and other species that are leaving Puget Sound or losing population because of loss of salmon and other food sources.

5. Staff Report

Emily reported that the NWSP Status Report project is moving forward, with meetings scheduled every other week to review the indicators. NREP is gearing up for Winter Water Quality Monitoring Day this week, and Student GREEN Congress on March 22 at Evergreen. Lois volunteered to help with registration for GREEN Congress.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43 pm.