

NRC CAC Meeting
January 12, 2021
6:00-7:30pm
Virtual Meeting

Present: Phyllis Farrell, Lois Ward, Martin McCallum, Ed Kenney, Yanah Cook, Paula Holroyde, Yolanda Markle, Karelina Resnick, Howard Glastetter, Emily McCartan (staff)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Phyllis called the meeting to order at 6:04pm. Members introduced themselves to Yolanda Markle, a prospective new member interested in water quality in Pierce County.

2. Issue Updates

Thurston County RAP – The Thurston County Commission has passed a policy change that will allow asphalt recycling in the Nisqually Sub-Area. Howard and Ed shared a draft memorandum to the Nisqually River Council proposing the NRC send a letter advocating for on-site field studies of leachate and water or soil contamination at other Thurston County RAP sites. The memo cites an abstract from a literature review of asphalt recycling studies, which noted the lack of general field research in real RAP sites (as opposed to laboratory column tests). Thurston County has an opportunity to study existing Lakeside and other RAP piles stored outside the Nisqually Sub-area and provide more accurate, real-world data. There is also interest in testing for the presence of 6ppd-quinone (toxic to coho) in RAP, following the new research presented at December's NRC meeting. This could be a good opportunity for a graduate research project with a university partner. The NRC has substantial influence in the county and this is an opportunity to contribute to a worldwide body of research on this topic. The storage and weather exposure of recycled asphalt piles is primarily a concern for water quality due to the potential runoff of leachate and road chemicals. Phyllis noted there are potential air quality issues that should also be carefully examined at permitting.

CAC members discussed the draft letter and made edits. By consensus, the CAC will submit this document to the Nisqually River Council and request that they send it to Thurston County.

Legislative Session Overview – Phyllis gave an update on several bills being followed by environmental organizations. Several bills concerning the Growth Management Act would require local planners to address climate change, salmon recovery, and other environmental issues. Other bills of interest include plastics and recycling, funding for municipal wastewater treatment plants (20% of Puget Sound does not meet oxygen standards in the Clean Water Act), toxic boat paint, wildfire funding, invasive species, and statewide funding for community forests, fish passage, PFAS contaminants, and silvaculture. Some groups have begun advocating for a gas or tire tax to address the toxic impacts of tire dust on coho. Members noted concerns with past environmental legislation that has not had sufficient “teeth” to enforce

protections (under GMA or Shoreline Management Act, etc). Counties also face a lack of resources and staff to monitor effectively. The NRC and other stakeholders have discussed this, and there is growing recognition of the need to shift from a “no net loss” to an “ecological gain” framework for planning and development, to protect and regain ecological functions that have been seriously degraded. The League of Women Voters is tracking GMA issues closely. Phyllis will share contact information for those interested in learning more.

TPU – Ed reported that Howard met with Thurston County officials regarding flood risks this week. Howard had submitted a complaint to FERC regarding the February 2020 flood, and FERC ruled that TPU had acted in compliance with their license, which does not specify a maximum reservoir level during the rainy winter season. Howard believes the license should be different, but also pointed out that TPU has often been out of compliance by falling below the summer levels required under their license. In the summer and fall of 2020, TPU maintained more water in the reservoir than they have in past years. As rains have picked up this winter, the reservoir level remained high and has required them to increase flows this week, although Ed and Howard feel the management decisions have been unnecessarily risky. The Nisqually River is currently 3 feet below flood stage at McKenna, and this event is not anticipated to cause significant flooding, although weather patterns can change quickly.

Water Quality Court Decision – A recent federal court settlement will require the EPA and WA Department of Ecology to address runoff from farming, grazing, and septic systems impacting water quality. Environmental organizations brought the lawsuit to enforce regulations that state and federal regulators have not sufficiently addressed. This may have significant implications for rural land management, such as for agricultural exemptions to the Shoreline Management Act which result in contaminated runoff. The CAC would be interested in an update from the Department of Ecology as they move forward in addressing this.

3. Staff Update

Several presentations requested by the CAC will be on the docket for NRC meetings in 2021 (no schedules past January are set yet), including Yelm Public Works and wastewater treatment, homelessness.

Other suggestions from the CAC include:

- Thurston and Pierce County growth, development, and land use planning
- Forest management

4. For the Good of the Order

Phyllis thanked the CAC for contributing to her get-well-from-surgery flowers.

Several members shared appreciation for the salmon greeting cards from this year’s NRF fundraiser.