

NRC CAC Meeting
October 13, 2020
6:00-8:00pm
Virtual Meeting

Present: Phyllis Farrell, Lois Ward, Ed Kenney, Karelina Resnick, Howard Glastetter, Paula Holroyde, Emily McCartan (staff)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Phyllis called the meeting to order at 6:26pm. Because of the conflict with the LWV Water Forum on November 10, next month's meeting will be pushed back a week to Tuesday, November 17, 6pm.

2. Member Issues

Recycled Asphalt – The Thurston Planning Commission recommended that the proposal move forward with Option 3, which changes the policy to allow RAP but does prescribe Best Management Practice. David met with Ed, Phyllis, and Lois to discuss CAC concerns and came up with a letter that recommended specific BMPs to address the concerns. The County has issued a Determination of Non-Significance for the proposal, which Phyllis believes will be appealed by environmental groups to call for an Environmental Impact Statement. There are two weeks to file that appeal. The next step would be a hearing before the County Commissioners, which is not yet scheduled. The CAC and NRC's position has been that Holroyd should not extend their gravel mine below the water table, especially if RAP is allowed. There is interest from numerous stakeholders in following the position of the Nisqually Tribe, which has indicated through David that they are willing to compromise to allow RAP with substantial BMPs and monitoring. Howard wrote a letter to Kevin Hansen to suggest testing under existing RAP piles at other sites, to assess whether there is leaching occurring. There is not much data from onsite testing and this is an opportunity for the County to have some leadership.

TPU – Howard's technical difficulties prevented a full discussion. In previous email discussion, Ed and Howard passed along current dam operation data to Commissioner Gary Edwards, who sent it to Thurston Emergency Management to look into.

LWV Water Forum – Scheduled for November 10, 6-8pm over Zoom, discussing water quality in all Thurston County watersheds. Members are encouraged to help spread the word.

Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan – Draft plan is out and Phyllis and Emily have both circulated it. Comments are encouraged through October 16 (Allison Osterberg from TRPC will be presenting on it at River Council that morning). Reception from environmental groups and local governments has been positive. Thurston County has offered some seed money funding, hoping others will also contribute. The concern is that budget pressures from COVID will limit the investments. Public

support will help convince local governments that climate is a crisis that needs to be addressed.

Thurston Mineral Lands – Planning Commission has made recommendations. Only one was supported by the environmental community and staff (maintaining 1000-ft buffers for mining operations). Staff and environmental groups advocated against co-designation of mineral and ag lands, parcel size, and others, which the Planning Commission did not recommend. There will be more opportunities for advocacy before the BOCC at a public hearing to be scheduled by the end of 2020. It is likely more stringent than Pierce County, but would need to ask Maya Teeple for more information. Sand and gravel are valuable resources in Washington State and a significant issue in county comprehensive plans. The Thurston proposal would significantly increase the acres of lands designated as open to mining. Howard noted that originally, mines were only permitted in areas with enough material to keep mining for at least 50 years.

3. Staff Updates

Steelhead Return report from Nisqually Tribe and WDFW – Escapement for steelhead in 2019 was 1,411 fish, the 4th highest return in 25 years (4 were in the last 5 years). Very positive. Chinook returns have been much lower than forecasted so far, but hatchery is still collecting data.

Phyllis reported on a webinar she attended about pinniped take going forward in the Columbia. We do not know if there is discussion about similar proposals for Puget Sound.

Streamflow Restoration – WRIA 11 received funding for 5 of our 8 grant applications, a great result.

4. For the Good of the Order

Ed accompanied Craig Smith from the Tribe on a coho survey in Elbow Lake Creek, where the county has recently replaced fish passage barriers with bridges that should allow them better access to the creek.

Tree plantings with NREP and NLT starting October 21 – lots of volunteers needed! Please spread the word. Emily will send links to the sign-ups.