

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

Present: Phyllis Farrell, Lois Ward, Martin McCallum, Ed Kenney, Howard Glastetter, Yanah Cook, Justin Hall (staff), Emily McCartan (staff)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Members gave updates on how they are doing. Yanah Cook introduced herself as a new member of the CAC.

Justin shared that longtime CAC and NRC member Fred Michelson passed away this summer. The NRC would like to do something to recognize his many years of dedication to the watershed, but will wait to hear his family's wishes. Fred was a great friend to everyone in the NRC and CAC family and a tireless advocate for the Nisqually watershed.

2. Issue Updates

Community Forest: The Community Forest completed its annual harvest before the snows began. Funds from harvested timber return to the Nisqually Community Forest, which will help maintain roads, pay for future harvest, and eventually hire staff. There is still a lot of maintenance thinning to do to improve the overall health of forest from the condition it was purchased in. They hope to acquire another 4.5 sections (about 3000 acres) from several funding sources in the next year. There are an increasing number of community forests in Washington State. The term refers to the goals and strategy of managing for the local community rather than for profit or investors. The NCF is a 501(c)(3) with an independent board and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Nisqually Land Trust, which is a technical legal arrangement to allow more flexibility and protection. Justin is a member of the NCF board of directors and the current vice-president, and funded to provide staff support through the Nisqually River Foundation.

Thurston RAP: The Thurston County Board of County Commissioners held a public hearing last week on the proposed policy change to allow asphalt recycling in the Nisqually subarea. They are expected to vote to approve the policy change on December 15. David Troutt testified on behalf of the NRC, summarizing prior comments about the need to consider the sub-area holistically and strongly encouraging best management practices and monitoring be required if RAP is permitted. Specific BMPs would be developed when the Lakeside permit is created, which cannot happen until after the policy change is approved. Lakeside sent a formal letter stating their commitment to monitor and report data to the Nisqually River Council if the policy and permit are approved. Environmental groups continue to have concerns about water quality impacts from RAP, magnified by the recent study published this week about toxic tire chemicals killing coho salmon. Leachate and runoff is much less of a concern if the RAP piles are kept covered and dry. The

CAC came to a consensus to ask the NRC to request that Thurston County conduct testing of other local RAP storage sites. Ed and Howard will draft a brief letter making this request.

Sequalitchew Creek: Ed and other community advocates have been working on a way to restore Sequalitchew Creek as a flowing stream. A deal is close to final with the City of DuPont, JBLM, Cal Portland, and community members which would restore water to the creek from JBLM and partner with South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group to restore habitat and beaver function. Cal Portland will continue to mine gravel closer to DuPont, in exchange for providing significant funding for restoration to the creek. It will provide rearing habitat for Chinook and coho, and may be able to support spawning for chum and trout eventually. There is more work remaining to be done, and a full presentation to the NRC will be scheduled when it is ready to share.

Yelm Wastewater: Ed reported that a recent report stated a high percentage of turbidity material in Puget Sound is due to poorly performing wastewater systems. Ecology regulations are not sufficient to address the volume of violations. Yelm's system is better than some areas, but needs significant upgrades. The CAC would like to have an update from the Yelm Public Works director to the NRC soon, as well as one from the Tribe to hear about their wastewater treatment system.

Olympian Environmental Reporter: The Olympian newspaper is considering hiring an environmental reporter, and has reached out to environmental groups to gauge interest in funding for the position. Loss of newspaper revenue has meant loss of local reporting capacity, but papers have found success by appealing directly to stakeholders for fund to cover local issues. Phyllis has been in touch with the Olympian on behalf of the Sierra Club about helping with fundraising. There is a significant need for local reporting on environmental issues, and it would be a great community benefit to have a dedicated journalist covering them. The CAC is interested in bringing the proposal to the River Council for support (moral, not financial) if and when it is ready to move forward.

3. For the Good of the Order

Ed reported that the biosolids the Nisqually area was concerned about will now be incinerated at a facility outside the county. The Legislature is considering some early studies of alternative biosolid treatments.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20pm.