

NRC CAC Meeting
January 11, 2022
6:00-7:00pm
Virtual Meeting

Present: Eric Casino, Phyllis Farrell, Howard Glastetter, Paula Holroyde, Ed Kenney, Martin McCallum, Lois Ward, Tristan Olson (staff)

1. Welcome, Introductions, and Check-In

Phyllis called the meeting to order at 6:05pm. Members introduced themselves and the minutes were approved. Phyllis reminded members it would be a short meeting so as to attend the Climate Reality Project Event at 7pm. The next Nisqually River Council (NRC) meeting will take place on January 21st.

2. Staff Update

Christmas trees will be collected until the end of January to be used in the Herring Spawning Enhancement Study. You can drop your tree off in the back parking lot of the Nisqually Natural Resources office, there is a sign. Nisqually River Foundation is looking into how it can update and carry forward the Stream Stewards program in a hybrid model, with more updates to come.

3. Issue Updates

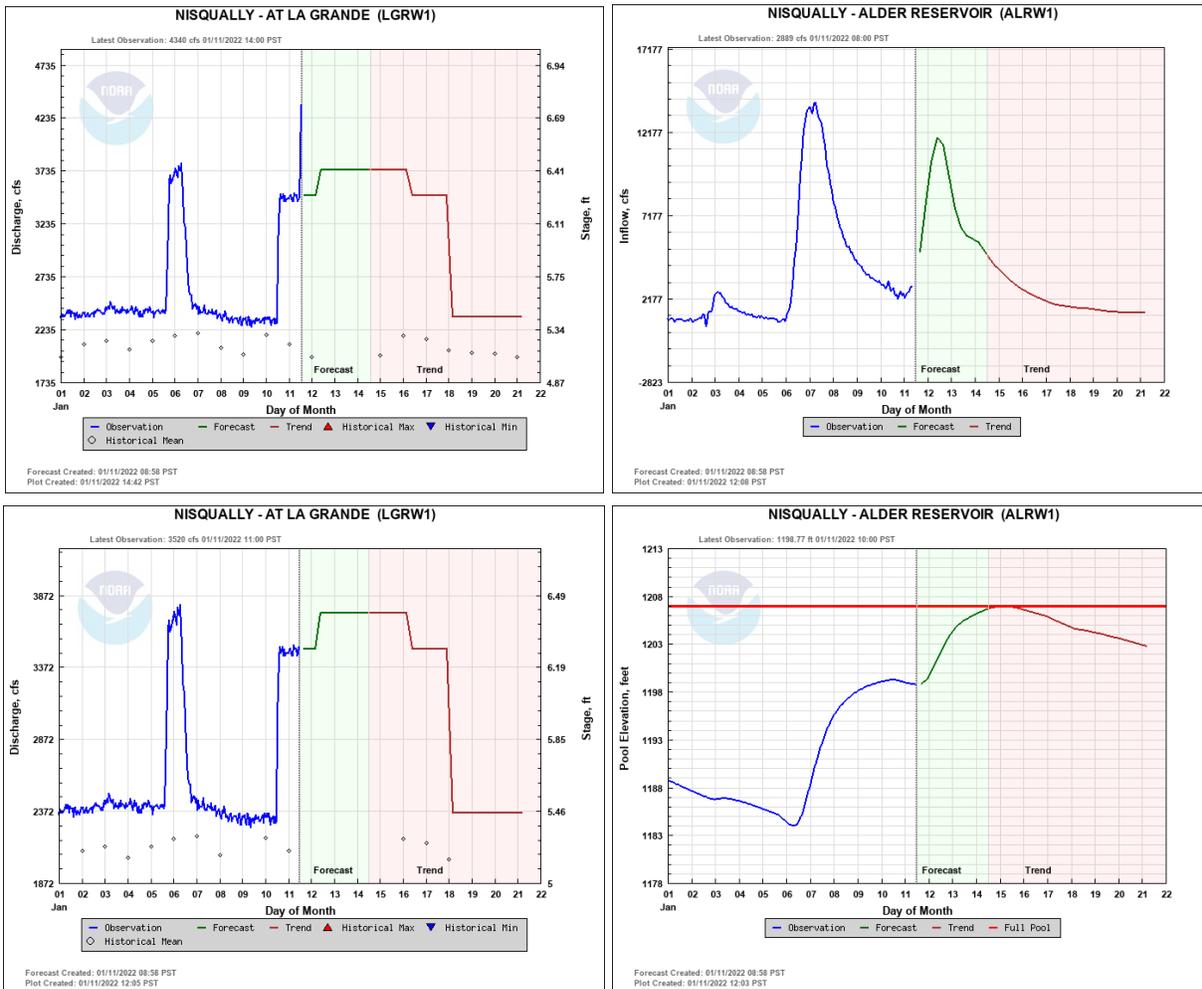
Flooding – Both Howard and Ed speak with Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU) and Thurston County during potential flood events. During the heavy rains in November, TPU released water before the storm as well as during the storm. TPU then cut back on how much they were releasing when Ed contacted the County and informed them of high levels. This communication prevented flooding and was similar to how TPU handled the rains a week ago. However, they have not been following these actions during the most recent rains. They usually wait till the flood hits the reservoir and then start releasing water when it gets too close causing the Mashel River to dump water into the Nisqually.

Ed stated that the NRC and Tribe underestimate the effects of TPU. While there is still snow present, it is 52 degrees. If there is a flood, TPU will only say how they mitigated a larger flood. TPU recently released a little water ahead of time, but not enough and not quickly enough. Howard does not think there will be a flood, but we will be two or three feet from capacity in the middle of winter which is a dangerous level. Both storms predicted 20,000cfs, if TPU discharges say 10,000cfs this will raise the reservoir eight feet, so you need to dump a lot more. There is, however, a new director of emergency services who seems capable and quick.

What is within TPU's control given the recent rains and snow?

Howard mentioned the NOAA graphics that come out every hour that present ten days of history, the current levels, and a ten day forecast (examples below). TPU can

use these NOAA reports to decide how much to let out beforehand. The current forecast shows that we are right on the edge, with levels letting up on Friday.



There is currently no flooding in the Nisqually valley, but the snowpack is big and melting rapidly. Three days of more than an inch of rain on snow and you can have flooding. The '96 flood was caused when flooding in November of '95 froze before a huge rain. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) stated that the 2020 flood did not violate the TPU's license, but this is because there were essentially no rules to violate.

What are the implications for the watershed as a whole in regard to flooding?

Since the County emergency services must use resources to deal with the aftermath of flooding and because there are private and tribal owned properties that are affected by floods, CAC members would like to explore the idea of a potential standing committee. This committee would focus on the coordination of mitigating floods and involve NRC staff, a Nisqually Indian Tribe (NIT) liaison, County officials,

and CAC members Ed and Howard. Tristan will look into this and report back. Phyllis will plan on proposing this idea during the upcoming NRC meeting.

George Walter, who is an NIT representative, has influence with TPU, but he underestimates their impact. Thomas O'keefe, who got significant legislation through the Trump administration was asked to join in on recommendations going forward. On a related note, there is currently a run of coho up the middle of the Nisqually that has not been seen since the 80s (~12 live fish and five carcasses).

Is there an idea of an action plan that can be implemented?

We need to be proactive regarding potential flood events and not reactive. Keep winter time levels low so that they can react in the case of a flood. TPU is constantly pushing the limits and while the FERC is correct in that they did not violate their license in the winter, they have in the summer. Alder Lake is supposed to be kept no more than ten feet below capacity, but around Labor Day it has sometimes been 70 feet below capacity. Why not make it 20 feet below capacity in the summertime and then keep it lower in the winter, say seven to ten feet below capacity - this is just a suggestion.

Upcoming Legislative Priorities - CAC would like to know if the Nisqually River Foundation and the Nisqually Indian Tribe have a list of top priorities that members could support and speak on (through public comment or some other way) during the current legislative session. Tristan will look into this and report back to CAC. Members are also curious as to the current status of redistricting.

Restoration Projects Update - CAC members would like a general overview and update on restoration plans currently in the works, such as planting trees, especially in regard to any projects that need help this year or that are culminating in 2022.

An update regarding Toboton Creek was requested as it is believed that the water is being illegally diverted. The County recently put a salmon passage across it, but just above the passage (somewhere between Peissner and Bald Hill road) the water is not acting normally. This is significant as there are currently two coho runs here in the last week of November as well as another in January / February.

Martin requested an update on what kinds of restorations are planned in the Mashel river to rebuild/reconstruct the engineered log jams that were taken out by a landslide near Eatonville a few years ago.

There is a lot of concern with current forest permitting practices. What are the bills that have been introduced and what can be done about the legal harvests that impact salmon going streams?

Tristan will look into these updates and it was suggested to contact Sayre Hodgson of the Nisqually Indian Tribe.

4. For the Good of the Order

Martin mentioned that the Deschutes River is being flooded due to private forest land practices. While the last of the barriers have been removed to create a small estuary where there was once a trout holding pond, to the west past Evergreen State College there is now a 100% salmon blocking barrier. This came across the Capital Facility Plan and while the funding is secured to fix this important waterway, the urgency of getting it done is essential. There are wild Chum and Coho particular to that stream, we'll lose them if we don't act quickly.

Next CAC meeting will take place virtually on Tuesday, February 8th.

Meeting adjourned at 6:59pm and members left to attend the CRP Event