NRC CAC Meeting
July 13, 2021
6:00-8:00pm
Virtual Meeting

Present: Howard Glastetter, Phyllis Farrell, Lois Ward, Martin McCallum, Glynnis Nakai, Ashley Von Essen, Joanne Park

1. **Welcome and Introductions**
   Phyllis called the meeting to order at 6:13pm.

2. **Staff Update**
   NRF and NRC are setting September as the goal for in-person meetings. The Sierra Club is having a picnic on August 4th, 5-7pm. Many environmental groups will be there. Leaders and representatives will be there to introduce themselves and share a little bit about their organization. It will be at Priest Point Park in Olympia, WA at Kitchen One. Brochures or pamphlets are welcome at this event. If the Yil Me Hu newsletters can be handed out at this event, that would be great. Lois and Ashley offered to coordinate this.

   There was some conversation about spam emails and making sure we are sending emails to the right email addresses. Phyllis went to a salmon and orca summit recently where there were several tribal representatives present and it was a very interesting rally.

3. **Salmon Recovery Projects**
   Ashley Von Essen, Nisqually LE

   There was a brief overview of the Lead Entity (LE). Nisqually Indian Tribe is the lead entity for salmon recovery for the Nisqually Watershed. LE is eligible for specific funding allocations from the Legislature to fuel recovery and habitat restoration/protection projects. There is an annual grant round where sponsors put together projects. There are two local recovery chapters - one for Steelhead and one for Chinook. In 2017, they revamped how they reviewed and approved projects in order to include Steelhead. Eligible projects need to be reviewed/approved by both the LE citizens and tech committees (NRC/NSHWG) and the regional organization for recovery (PSP) via 4 year work plan. There are currently 70 projects on the 4-year work plan. Ashley submits these projects to PSP and they make sure they are eligible for funding.

   For more background and information on LEs, here is a link that provides the directory -
   https://rco.wa.gov/salmon-recovery/managing-organizations/lead-entities/

   Salmon Recovery initiatives are organized by tiers, which are represented by the different colors below:

- Nisqually Estuary
- Nisqually River Mainstem
- Mashel River
- Ohop Creek
- Fish Passage Barriers
- Nearshore
- Muck Creek
- Bald Hills Tributaries - Powell, Lackamas, Tobotton, Elbow Lake
- Prairie Tributaries - Yelm ,Brighton, Horn, Harts, McKenna, Tanwax, Murray, Kreger

After all the dikes came out, monitoring started immediately and is still going on today. Chris Ellings is working with USGS and some grad students to measure the vegetation and elevation out in the Nisqually Delta. In addition to that, the I-5 project is also happening. The Alder dam stops a lot of sediment. USGS study estimates that Alder Reservoir Traps approximately 92% sediment. They are taking a look at what is going on. There is a lot of research that still needs to happen to figure out how to move forward. There is more work to be done.

They are continuing partnership with Tacoma Public Utilities and comanage the system and make sure fish is a priority at these facilities.

There was discussion of some projects for recovering the Mashel Watershed. The Mashel is the largest tributary in our mainstem. In 2004, there was an assessment done by watershed professionals. They evaluated and realized there wasn't enough habitat diversity and it is a wood-poor system. Several groups completed a series of projects to put log jams in these areas. These systems are supposed to trap wood and create more habitat. However, these log jam systems need maintenance and are not trapping enough wood so they are going back to do some maintenance (ELJ construction and maintenance). It is important to keep more water in the system for younger trees because they need more water. The town of Eatonville is in need of a stormwater system. They also pull their drinking water from the Mashel River.

Ohop Creek Restoration had to pull from about 20 different grant resources to complete the project. They put curve back into the channel and take the section of creek to make it more dynamic and make it look more like an actual stream. Lower Ohop Restoration Phase 4 includes restoring the last 2 miles of a 6-mile long section of Ohop Creek. There is a lot of land outreach that needs to be done in order to move forward with this project. This may remain on the 4-year work plan until it is done. Directly upstream from the Lower Ohop Restoration– is the location for the Middle Ohop Design project. This 1.3 mile reach provides excellent spawning gravel both Coho and Chinook.

It has been proven that our fish hang out in the nearshore area. There was discussion of the Nisqually Land Trust's Marine Conservation Program, which includes acquisitions, such as Baird Cove Protection, Hogum Bay, Sound View Camp

Conservation Easement, and Anderson Island Protection Projects. DNR's Aquatic Reserve Program has just completed a feasibility study for Still Harbor on McNeil Island.

In Nisqually, we have found that to be able to successfully do restoration projects throughout the watershed, we need to continue to protect shorelines and riparian areas via acquisition and conservation easements. Owning and managing is the best way to protect our watershed. They keep track of what is protected and not protected. Right now, 77.4% are protected and 22.6% are not. They are doing their best to make sure it stays this way forever.

There are so many projects that have been completed and talked about. There is a public portal you can go on anytime to see active, completed, and dormant projects throughout the State. You can see this in the Salmon Recovery Portal at this link - https://srp.rco.wa.gov/home

SMP draft is being currently reviewed and both Ashley and Glynnis were asked if they had any suggestions on what should be included. There is another meeting next week for public comment. If there is anything that should be included, please let Phyllis know.

Eatonville's wastewater treatment plant has some failing septics. How is this being addressed and what can we do as NRC or CAC about this? There are some other issues like the Eatonville dump and there is poor water quality occurring because of this. Ecology may be following up but it was uncertain on how failed septics and the dump issue are being addressed but there needs to be some follow-up. Perhaps the role of CAC or NRC would be to formalize a request from Ecology to address these concerns. The CAC indicated this is a potential topic of conversation for future meetings that need some additional guidance and comments from David Troutt. Lois plans to do the CAC report during the NRC meeting this Friday and will mention these concerns in Eatonville.

We know the Tribe is the lead entity, but who are the other entities? And how did this structure come about? This goes back to when Chinook was listed, the Puget Sound region developed a recovery chapter from NOAA to talk about what they were going to do to go into recovery. In the Puget Sound alone, there are 15 lead entities and approximately 25 in the entire state. Each area has their own group similar to the NRC and CAC where local people are driving local recovery. This was helpful to get a big picture idea of how these groups work. Ashley is happy to share some maps and the LE directory with the CAC members. Everyone agreed this presentation was very helpful in understanding how the LE works and what they do. Outreach is the best way to get people involved. Ashley is happy to share this knowledge with other groups or anyone willing to listen as it is important to know and connects everyone to the beautiful resources that exist here.

4. **BFJNNWR Restoration Update**
Glynnis Nakai, USFWS

We manage BFJNNWR but we also manage Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge in Hoquiam, WA. Little known is the Black River Unit just south of Black Lake. The watershed is about 3800 acres to protect the Black River Watershed. It is not open to the public. There was a map shown off of Google Earth to show where this watershed is located. It is mostly made up of wetlands. It is unique in that it is entirely aquifer fed, which means it is primarily being fed by groundwater. There are alot of beavers that create a diversity of wetlands (open water, emergent and forested) including a bog system, which is very unique in Western Washington. It is a very diverse watershed. They are still acquiring land from willing sellers with the intention of being managed by USFWS. Currently, they own about 2200 acres. One of the latest properties is on the northside. They have acquired about 800 acres from a Port Blakely, a working tree farm over the past 3-4 years, to protect the habitat. It is mostly forested but there are creeks that flow from the Capital Land Trust properties from the west. In the Black River Unit, there is a threatened Oregon Spotted Frog, a federally and state listed species. This particular watershed is critical habitat for these frogs. They have the highest population of Oregon Spotted Frogs in Western Washington. It is not just the BFJNNWR that they manage. Refuges are very diverse in what they do. They protect the land but they also manage wildlife, have a visitor services and education programs, and acquire land. The projects are in the form of adaptive management and monitoring. The efforts of the community and organizations pushed to protect the Delta and that is when it was purchased by USFWS to protect and manage it. Their primary purpose is to protect, restore, and provide habitat for migratory and overwintering birds.

There was a question asked about the curvy line (just north of I-5). It is Medicine Creek, now called McAllister Creek. This creek is culturally important for the Nisqually Tribe as a freshwater system that flows into the Delta. When they constructed I-5, instead of keeping the historic channel, they diverted this creek. When I-5 is reconstructed, it's unknown whether they will be retain the historic pathway.

There was a freshwater wetland when the Brown Farm Dike was in place. The problem was that it was heavily encroached with Reed Canary Grass, an invasive species andthere was no way to manage this and control the Reed Canary Grass. A setback dike was constructed in 2008, prior to removing the Brown Farm Dike to create freshwater units with water control structure in order to manage the habitat for water birds. Maintenance workers will be out there in the summer and start mowing. The reason for mowing, tilling, and plowing is a way to work the soil in order to control invasive plants like Reed Canary Grass. They mow it down and flood it up to attract migratory birds. In order to evaluate effectiveness, they conduct waterbird surveys to help evaluate whether or not their habitat management is effective.

There are different methods for controlling and removing invasive plants. They use specific herbicides that are approved for spot treatment and it is very limited. One way of controlling invasives is not by chemicals but by mowing, plowing, and tilling. Every year, they do invasive plant treatment. There is extensive mapping every year and control as needed. Bat monitoring was piloted last year to inventory bats in the area. In the State, they assist with Band-tailed Pigeon surveys.

They are working with the Tribe, USGS, and NRF, there was an intensive monitoring effort in the Delta to monitor the changes that were occurring with the return of the tidal inundation. There is 10+ years of data that they are summarizing and planning to put together a portfolio that summarizes the habitat changes, fish use, and bird use of the area. The planis to complete this by the end of the calendar year and have a webinar where Chris Ellings, Isa with USGS, and Glynnis to talk about the changes and responses to the dike removal.

They continue to monitor the Delta every year and map out the vegetation. They read the sedimentation levels. It is important they start seeing vegetation as that vegetation will start capturing the sediment. This is how you start getting marsh habitat. . They look at the elevation levels which relates to the project Ashley spoke about with the sediment behind the dam. All the channels now coming into the restoration area that were blocked is creating habitat for fish. It is a nursery for fish. The more vegetation there is, the better, for food items and fish can seek cover and cooler temperatures in some of these areas. These systems are monitoring so they can track changes over time.

They also conduct bird surveys in the Delta during the winter months

WDFW is planning to put out more than a hundred traps to see if there are European Green Crabs in the Delta. This is a priority invasive species that can be damaging to the habitat and compete with other species. In Grays Harbor, there are a lot of European Green Crabs present. There hasn't been any trapping in South Puget Sound so they want to see if they are present.

The bill that changed the name of the refuge also established the Medicine Creek Treaty National Memorial and there is an old tree that is a seedling of one of the trees that existed back in the 1854 when the Treaty was signed. The area is on the refuge and is a square-octagonal shape that includes a portion of the historic Medicine Creek, the Treaty Tree, and some of the marsh as a memorial for tribes to visit. It will not be open to the public, it will only be open to tribal members. USFWS is working with the tribe to create an interpretive plan that includes a monument for the site, interpretive panels, and a cultural kiosk to share their story with the visitors that come to the Refuge. When we return to in-person meetings, we will continue the meetings with Treaty Tribes and finalize a Plan.

USFWS does more than just manage land. They are workingwith USGS and Nisqually Tribe to look at sea level changes, they do modeling to see how high the water will be in different scenarios, to look at restoration and habitat protection.

The county is developing an SMP review and Phyllis has not been able to ascertain their no net loss and how they measure that. Does USFWS have any metrics showing ecological gain. USFWS does not do this along the coastline but they have other ways to measure improvement of habitat. They measure sedimentation at the ten Sediment Elevation Tables by depth to compare with previous years. When looking at plant species, they record plant species, height, and percent cover.

Glynnis was thanked for her interesting presentation.

5. **Issue Update**

RAP Update - Howard Glastetter

Howard used the Google Earth map that Glynnis pulled up to point out where the virgin asphalt is sitting. There is raw virgin asphalt there and it is going into the aquifer and flowing down. It is worse than recycled asphalt in some ways because it has never been bound and open to the weather. It is like coffee grounds in a coffee pot that allows things to leach through and take all the minerals surrounding the rocks. The hearing examiner did not give any opinion. Howard has not heard back on their decision yet. You can see the size of this pile - it is very large if you look at the cars and buildings nearby.

Phyllis suggested a formal letter to the county to address this issue. The top of the pile is flat so any water that comes down will sit on top and leach chemicals. Howard said this is probably worse than RAP. This virgin asphalt needs to be covered. Google Earth does have a historic tabs to see previous images to track the pile. These issues that occur off the BFJNNWR site, this information can be passed to a different branch of USFWS to research into it and work with the county and provide a letter. This branch is called Ecological Services.

There was a question asked about why the virgin asphalt is worse than RAP. Howard said because the pile is fresh, so it is porous enough that the chemicals can leach out of it much faster and in larger amounts. There needs to be a clear understanding as to why the virgin asphalt is just as bad as RAP.

Glacial Blowout - Howard Glastetter

The Nisqually Valley News had some concern about glacial blowout. It was an interview with someone who works for Mount Rainier. It has recently been as low as 9 inches so there will be more glacial flow coming down into the valley so there is a real risk. Tacoma Power needs to be careful mosty in the winter but in the summer months too.

6. **For the Good of the Order**

Many members expressed their thanks for the wonderful presentations tonight. They were sorry there were not more members to attend to hear such informative presentations.

7. **Adjourn**
   The meeting was adjourned at 7:58pm.