

MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2016, 9-12 AM.

Old Freshwater Ecocentre, Freshwater Fisheries Society, 1080 Wharncliffe Rd

9:00 Meeting called to order by Genevieve who provided welcome and acknowledgement that our meeting is on Cowichan Tribes territory

In Attendance: Jennifer Hermary (MP Alistair MacGregor), Brian Houle (Catalyst), Shaun Chadburn (North Cowichan), Dave Preikshot (Department of Fisheries and Oceans), Barry Hetschko (Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society), Eric Marshall (Cowichan Valley Naturalists Society), Natasha Riebe (Freelance Journalist), Diana Gunderson (Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society), Jean Atkinson (CLRSS), Carol Milo (CVNS), Dennis Maltais (Western Forest Products), Brian Nielsen (WFP), Don Closson (BC Parks), Richard Painter (Observer), Christine Gilbertson (Observer), Miyo Stevens (Citizen), Kerry Davis (CVRD Area Director), Keith Lawrence (CVRD Staff), Genevieve Singleton (Nature Interpreter/CSRT Co-Chair), Parker Jefferson (One Cowichan/CSRT Co-Chair), Elizabeth Bailey (Cowichan Land Trust/SMWS), Bob Crandall (Cowichan Lake Salmonid Enhancement Society), Ian Morrison (CVRD Area Director), Geoff Strong (Cowichan Estuary Restoration and Conservation Society), Joy Wade (Fundy Aqua), Martha Lescher (SMWS Volunteer), Rob James (Western Stevedoring), Rosalie Sawrie (One Cowichan), Lori Iannidinardo (CVRD Area Director), Leroy Van Wieren (CLRSS), Derrek Marven (Swan and Goose Count Coordinator)

Regrets: Swarn Leung (the Hub), Dave Lindsey (Timberwest)

9:10 Round the Table: BRIEF updates as to projects, activities since last meeting

Brian Houle Catalyst - Cowichan Lake and River Review: We are currently at the levels of water that we were at last year several months earlier. River Flow is being controlled down to 4.5cms (minimum legal level). We will be there by May 28th and the past 2 years we didn't get there until August 8th. The situation has been getting progressively worse for the past 3 years. The Heather Mountain snow pillow shows that snow melt won't have a significant effect on lake. Everything is early. Current projections show that they could hold 4.5cms until Sept 4th if this summer is similar to last year. They

have been working with DFO and have Emergency Authorization to carry out this plan. Ongoing weekly stakeholder calls are happening.

Shaun Chadburn, North Cowichan - Stage One water restrictions are in effect as of May 1st. They are working on a partnership with FLNRO to do a Somenos Creek survey looking at Parrot Feather and looking at treatment options. This survey will likely happen in June. Shaun took a boat trip around Somenos Lake and didn't see any evidence of it in the lake.

Dave Priekshot, DFO - Concerned about flow decrease in Richards Creek last year. Involved in chinook and coho surveys in lower river and estuary which is part of the Salish Sea marine survival project. Privately working with SMWS on monitoring in Somenos basin, looking at coho habitat. Report from last year to go up on CSRT website.

Barry Hetschko, SMWS, CVNS – SMWS is waiting to hear about funding for several projects. WildWings Nature and Art Festival is being planned for October–November as is the Trumpeter Swan AGM. Many nature themed activities will be going on, tours etc. Have concerns about proposed pedestrian crossing across Somenos Creek at York Rd, SMWS thinking about holding forum. SMWS AGM is June 7th at Island Savings Centre (Koksilah Room) at 7pm. Karen Barry will be making a presentation about invasive species.

Eric Marshall, CVNS – Continuing monthly estuary bird counts, lots of herons and heron nests this year. There are 8-10 osprey with 5 nests in the estuary which is probably a record. Also say 2 black oyster catchers which aren't too common here.

Kerry Davis, CVRD - All water restrictions have been coordinated locally. Shawnigan water court issue is ongoing. Dumping continues due to appeals, stays etc.

Keith Lawrence, CVRD - Looking at drought level assessment of Vancouver Island. Currently the whole island is rated at level 1 which is normal. On a finer resolution some areas are more like a level 3 or 4. Working towards a more local drought level assessment to justify water restrictions etc. Updating New Normal website, please check out. <http://cvrdsnwnormalcowichan.ca/> Giant hogweed report line and bylaw <http://www.cvrdb.bc.ca/2283/Invasive-Species>.

Joanne Gunderson, CLRSS - Native plant project at the Lake Cowichan Secondary School.

Jean Atkinson, CLRSS - AGM is on May 29st. Riparian tour June 5th.

Dennis Maltais, WFP - Maintenance dredge of log haul channel will be happening in early June. Working under the advice of an environmental consultant.

Don Closson, BC Parks - Fire bans will likely be early this year. Tubing activity will likely be less due to low river levels.

Christine Gilberston, Observer - Concerned with water issues, and forestry practices in watershed.

Parker Jefferson, One Cowichan - Fry salvage has begun already. Several thousand steelhead juveniles collected yesterday. Watching Skutz falls to Sandy Pool.

Elizabeth Bailey, CLT – Cowichan is looking for board members to join. Anyone who is interested in conservation is welcome. Skills or knowledge in realty, law and accounting are a bonus. The estuary nature center school programs will have over 500 students participate in the months of May and June. Jillian Stewart of the College of Applied Biology wants to plan a Rivers Day celebration in September. The SMWS is partnering with the BC Wildlife Federation Wetlands Education Program to bring a day long free mapping workshop to Duncan of June 11th. Registration can be completed at: <http://www.eventbrite.ca/e/map-our-marshes-duncan-registration-20865221439>

Bob Crandall, CLSES – Presentation on CLSES is part of agenda. Been doing school education programs with Christy Wilson at DFO and outdoor teaching events. Focus of work is monitoring tributaries and doing fry salvage.

Ian Morrison, CVRD - Hiked up Ashburnam creek above dam. Looking at multi-repurposing of dam project. Chief Livingston passed away on Thursday night. The community is in mourning. Attended a water sustainability act presentation. Leader of opposition will be in town next week, tickets \$20.

Geoff Strong, CERCA - Working on Nature trail on dock road as main project at the moment. Lots of broom removed, now on hold due to nesting season. Gravel to be brought in and mowing along edges. Western Stevedoring to fix footbridge. Educational signage to come. Will be filling railroad. Clean up of slough also to come. 50 bird boxes have been installed. Concerns about roundup being used in the estuary on Dinsdale farm.

Lori Iannidinaldo, CVRD – In Cowichan Bay vessel operation has been restricted. Still need to get buoys and signage through the eelgrass beds. Derelict vessels are an issue. Marine zoning bylaw passed a while back. Still need to tour and inventory sewer units. Community conversations and meetings ongoing. Yellow flag iris invasive species in Marble Bay is an issue.

Derrek Marven, 28 year resident, coordinator of swan and goose count (CVNS, SMWS) – 2 issues to discuss: 1) Dinsdales farm in Cowichan Estuary, owned by Nature Trust BC, regarding hunting that is allowed. Hunting should not be allowed on this nature preserve land as it decreases its use as habitat by water fowl. 2) Somenos Marsh where the new dike reaches the highway at Beverly St. A fence was put up around Nature Trust land with barbed wire along top. This can become deadly to

waterfowl and other animals when submerged as marsh floods. North Cowichan and Nature Trust have been contacted.

Joe Saysell, Friends of Cowichan River - Broadway run trees are doing well. Writing a letter about a river closure like last year because of low water. Looking for other groups to join in writing to the minister about this. Have been gathering fry on river drifts, will now start walking. Water dropping fast, steelhead reds being left exposed. Pushing to get the weir raised.

Jennifer Hermary, for MP MacGregor - Receiving petition signatures on contaminated soil issue so that Alistair can talk about it in the House of Commons. Hoping to connect with local government on how to partner with regards to raising the weir.

Rob James, Western Stevedoring - Working with CERCA to redo foot bridge.

Rosalie Sawrie, One Cowichan – Working on campaign around education and awareness about raising the weir.

Leeroy Van Wieran, CLRSS - Full slate of summer work with restoration and education programs.

Cheri Ayers, consultant for Tribes, also works for DFO – Working on Chinook salmon rebuilding plan. Working on draft documents, action planning, characterization of the watershed. Co-chair of fish and flows working group established a work plan focused on getting more storage in lake, goal of resolution of height of weir by May 2017. Drafted principles and vision for this project. Looking at different options, as technical group.

Genevieve Singleton, Nature Interpreter - Website changed to Mail Chimp. Will check with Meg about people having issues opening emails etc. Bluebird project, starting to hatch this year, Bluebird Beer and Burger Sunday May 29th at Cow bay pub, tickets available at Nature Center, Volume One. Cowichan Valley Docents have had 700 kids out learning about Somenos Marsh recently. Will follow up on forestry meeting with Watershed Board. Also will follow up with Nature Trust re Derrek Marven's concerns.

Next meeting likely will include a presentation from Mark Kissinger, conservation officer.

Where should we do July meeting, outdoors? Visit weir and Didson? Half indoors and half out? Voted on outdoor meeting. Location to be decided.

10:30 Break (10 min)

10:40 Joy Wade of Fundy Aqua Services on the life history and limiting factors of the endangered Cowichan Lamprey

Power Point Presentation:

- Cowichan Lamprey are SARA listed, their critical habitat includes Cowichan and Mesachie lakes in their entirety.
- They are not in Cowichan River as far as we know and we don't know why.
- They are a parasitic fish but don't normally kill host. Cutthroat is preferred host.
- Ammocete (juvenile) habitat is silty, near shore.
- Adult habitat, free swimming, spawn in fluvial fans where rivers empty into lake.
- Don't know about life span, population abundance and there are other gaps in knowledge, studies have been limited as the species was only described in 80s
- Nearshore habitat is known to be critical, lake level critically important due to their need for water on the alluvial fans for spawning. They spawn around June. It is a concern that the lake levels continue to be lower earlier and that Catalyst has talked about pumping down the lake should the river flow below level of weir.

11:10 Bob Crandall on Cowichan Lake Salmonid Enhancement Society and Hatchery (CLSES)

Power Point Presentation:

- Mandate
- Public awareness, education, participation is key
- Incorporated in 1984
- Projects include fry salvage and chinook dna study
- Work with lots of different conservation groups
- Collect brood stalk in fall, classroom incubation program with hatchery
- Watershed education and storm drain marking with students
- Riparian planting, trail maintenance, interpretive signage
- Didson monitoring equipment installed to count chinook salmon

11:50 Conclusion of meeting

DRAFT