

Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable (CSRT) Notes Oct 15, 2024

Attending: Genevieve Singleton, CSRT; Parker Jefferson, CSRT; Karen Jarvis, Ellery Jackson-Renz, Environmental Services, CVRD; Jacquie Taylor, Cowichan Bring Back the Bluebirds (CBBTBP); Phaedra Douglass, Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society (CMWS); Barry Hetschko; Jill Thompson, Cowichan Watershed Board (CWB).

Online: Jim Deck, Cowichan Lake River Stewardship Society (CLRSS); Elizabeth Aitken, Volunteer coordinator, CVRD; Sunny Mizushima, DFO; Jay White, CLRSS; Danni Paydli, CWB, Jim Wisnia, Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre (CENC); Karen Deck, CVRD Director; Bruce Coates, Cowichan Valley Naturalists (CVNS).

Correction to notes from last meeting. Genevieve will add to Parker's comments.

CSRT Business:

1. Feedback on Quw'utsun Sta'lo' Skweyul, Sept. 22, 2024:

- Thanks to Sarah Mullock for putting up photos of QSS on our website. The organizing team will meet on Wednesday for a debrief. Bookkeeping and reporting out to funders have just begun.
 - Great to have so much Cowichan Tribes help – Robert Martin and Natalie Antoine as liaisons between CT and CRST was really helpful. Genevieve will thank Larry George for this. Peter Moses, Siem Lelum coordinator was also most helpful in ensuring a good event.
 - Volunteer parking worked out well.
 - Directional signs were clear.
 - Not possible to use a mobility walker. Paths were uneven around the booths. Genevieve could mention to Peter Moses.
 - Sound – PA system didn't work. Jim has contact for CVRD equipment including sound, tents, etc. Economic Development Cowichan.
 - Hard to get to all the tables – too much to do!
 - Very well organized at arrival and booth set up. Thank you to CLRSS for example at summer event
 - Overall, a wonderful event
2. Genevieve circulated a card for e who is off on medical leave for severe arthritis issues.
 3. Genevieve expressed condolences for the loss of Barry's mother, who attended many stewardship events with Barry and was very supportive of our work.
 4. Genevieve stated that she attended the last Watershed Board Meeting where Clay Reitsma (Municipality of North Cowichan) and Jas Sandhu (Town of Lake Cowichan) presented updates re upgrades sewage treatment for benefit of Cowichan River. She suggests that CSRT invite them to a future meeting. This was agreed to. (Update, they will speak at this on Dec. 17.
 5. Finger food potluck will follow CSRT Dec. 17 meeting, everyone welcome. Always a good time. Noon -1:30

6. Genevieve and Parker shared Rick Bryan's note to CSRT re the Benefits of Outdoor Recreation report and his concern re lack of presentations at CSRT from the recreation community. Rick will be asked to provide a recommendation of a speaker for a future meeting.

Roundtable updates:

Ellery Jackson-Renz, CVRD Environmental Services

- In response to the fishkill event in 2023 CVRD staff have been supporting CWB and the Province with their consistent bi-weekly monitoring since May. Various sites are monitored from Cowichan Lake to below the Somenos Creek outflow.
- August and November 5/30 protocol with CWB and BC. (5 in 30 sampling mean sampling five times over thirty days)
- CVRD – fall surface Water Quality (WQ) monitoring – other spots. Spring, summer low flow, fall. Effects on watersheds in the region. Lake, Little Beach, Rotary Park, Somenos Creek
- Phaedra Douglass stated that SMWS does sampling in Somenos Marsh and that the Municipality of North Cowichan (MNC) does Quamichan Lake.
- Cowichan Tribes is monitoring – 6PPDQ (chemical re tires contaminant)
- Phaedra Douglass has mapped who is doing what WQ sampling for Cowichan Watershed Board. On the website. This link will be shared via CSRT email list.

Bruce Coates, CVNS:

- CVNS speaker this evening, Oct. 15: Kayla Shehan – Resilient Coasts for Salmon Project – shoreline hardening etc. write for zoom connection to cvns@naturecowichan.net.
- We were involved in the WildWings Big Bird Day. Two teams of birders competed for International EBird Big Bird Day. 42 species were noted by Somenos volunteers; 75 by the Estuary team. Lots of fun.

Danni Paydli, CWB

- Kudos for River Day organizing.
- Speaker Night on Monday, Oct. 21, Dr Ken Ashley “Crisis Scene Investigation” regarding the Fish kill event. He is able to make it understandable – biologist, engineer and educator.
- Oct 28 regular Board meeting via zoom, everyone is always welcome to attend as guest.

Jay White, CLRSS

- I am a new CLRSS Board member. Letter to minister re protecting upper watershed from spawning steelhead.
- Project 84,000 – see it by Friday.
- Personally, working on goldfish invading spawning habitats in Alberta.
- Involved in 5 sites around Lake Cowichan for 6-PPPQ (tire contaminant) study group – Haley Tomlinson leading.

Elizabeth Aitken, CVRD parks volunteer coordinator

Partnering with several stewardship partners and schools on a variety of projects including:

- Invasives workshop Oct 21 in Ladysmith
- Oct 27 – Honeymoon Bay invasive removal.
- Hecate Park native plant beach restoration bed.
- Portion of Cowichan Lake trail
- Sahtlam Greenway
- Somenos
- Welcomes partnerships.

Jim Deck, CLRSS

- Encouraged everyone to attend the exhibit on the 84,000 fish kill Project at Cowichan Valley Art Gallery (by Duncan library). Very evocative.

Sunny Mizushima, DFO Stewardship Coordinator

no major updates to share but can answer questions

Jim Wisnia, CENC

- At our AGM Dorothy Marshall and Jim Wisnia stepped down; 7 new people. Jane Douglas and Pamela Williams are the new co-Chairs.
- Activities – Sea Squirts preschool programme on Wednesdays; Barnacle Buddies – parent-tot program
- We are boosting social media. Creature Feature on FB – different estuary creature each week.
- Mon 21st – volunteer tea.
- New Execrative Coordinator, Jennifer Baird. Reach her at JenniferB@cowichanestuary.ca
- TD Friends of Environment grant successful to help with older students.

Jacque Taylor, CBBBP

– speaking today

Phaedra Douglass, SMWS

- Salmon Watch program coming up – volunteers count salmon; will be announced when the salmon show up!
- Wrapping up Parrots feather (invasive plant of great concern)– big success this year. Removed a lot and plan to do more next year.
- WildWings fundraiser. nest box auction closes Oct 25.
- WildWings Green Gala Oct 26 at Birds Eye Cove. Catered.

Barry Hetschko

Wildwings nestbox auction. Cause is to extend the Boardwalk to create Malcolm's Place accessible viewing platform.

Swan and Goose Count restarts Nov 5, 9:45 AM, will be every Wednesday. Start at dog park. Come on out!

Jill Thompson, CWB

new CWB members including a Provincial member for the first time -

Interested to know whether anyone is hosting or wanting to host an online calendar for Cowichan stewardship community events

Speaker Night – perhaps WildWings nest box auction would like a table at Speaker Night.

Genevieve Singleton (CSRT), nature interpreter

Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team (GOERT) held their annual conference Oct 5th at UVIC. I was honoured to be the facilitator for the day. Focus was on creating an indigenous lens for restoration work. Ken Elliot and Cheyenne Williams, Cowichan Tribe members attended. Elder in-Residence for the day was Florence James of Penelakut. Dr. Jennifer Grenz was the keynote speaker. Take aways: we all need to do more than provide more than an acknowledgement at meetings; need to acknowledge that the Camas meadows landscape was created by agricultural endeavours for thousands of years. I would like to hold this conference in the valley in a few years. Garry Oak ecosystem is the rarest ecosystem in Canada.

I normally run “Salmon and the Forest” walks with Ken Elliott, JR Elliott, Heather Wright and DFO staff, and Stephanie Cottell out of Cowichan Hatchery. I hope I can find funding to do in the spring.

Tents for events! 6 tents are stored in Genevieve’s shed. These are meant to be shared by everyone.

Parker Jefferson, CSRT

- Bat monitoring ongoing.
- Chris Steiger seeking funding to do analysis of all the data.
- There is a PhD student available to work on analysis. Software can do batch analysis.
- We think there are around 20 species of bats in the valley, including endangered ones.
- White face disease is a concern.
- Fish update: - Chinook escapement goal has been met already. A really good year for chinook. Chum is the most important part of the ecosystem as the nitrogen input. Getting 10% of normal lately. Hoping to see more this year due to better ocean conditions this year. Hoping river will smell the way it should smell. 10lb each is size of many fish.

Jacquie Taylor, coordinator, presented an update on the Cowichan Bring Back the Bluebirds Project.

Next meeting: Nov. 19. Thanks to Jill Thompson for taking these notes. Edited by Genevieve Singleton