

Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable Notes Jan 21st, 2025

Attendance – Sarah Rosen, Karen Jarvis, Pamela Williams, Karen Deck, Jim Deck, Heather Pritchard, Sarah Jackman, Sunny Mizushima, Colleen Terlein, Jill Thompson, Parker Jefferson, Genevieve Singleton, Bruce Coates, T'uwahwiye' Philomena Williams, Clay Reitsma, Judith Cullington.

CSRT business:

1. An acknowledgement was expressed to Cowichan Tribes for their long stewardship of tumhw (land) and water.
2. Regrets: Ellery Jackson-Renz, Katie Mosewich – CVRD, Pam Jorgenson– Mosaic, Phaedra Douglass – SMWS, e – unaffiliated.
3. Thanks to Karen for lemon poppyseed muffins and to Karen and Jim for bringing the coffee! Thanks to Jill, of the Watershed Board for taking notes. Gratitude to Freshwater Society for the use of our meeting space.
4. Any changes to last month's notes? Notes included clarification of Phaedra's report.
5. Quw'utsun Sta'lo' Skweyul updates:
 - Genevieve will write to Larry George, Cowichan Tribes, respectfully requesting doing Quw'utsun Sta'lo' Skweyul as an annual event.
 - Shout out to CVRD staff, Keith Lawrence, Jeff Moore, Katy Mosevich and Ellery Jackson-Renz, to support QSS. Will transition event plan into spreadsheet.
 - Finances – thanks to Sunny/DFO offer to help with admin costs such as website and zoom. \$1k. Expenses are still on G's credit card which is being replaced, which led to our website being down for a few days. This has now been fixed. People contributed at Christmas potluck to cover other expenses.

Round the Table:

Sarah Rosen, worked in environmental fields but has been in Europe recently. Unaffiliated, previous Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre education coordinator, ocean educator.

Karen Jarvis – unaffiliated. Nothing to report today

Pamela Williams – Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre, Barnacle Buddies program started – 6 weeks. Parent/tot. Great to see! Sea Squirts – drop-in program on Wednesdays. Nature Centre open Sat/Sun 11-3.

Karen Deck– CVRD Area I – CVRD bought ~71 hectares on Bald Mtn – natural park - not groomed trails – near the Boy Scout area. Inching towards 30% by 2030 Biodiversity goal for Canada. Acknowledged CVRD Cowichan Emergency Mgmt. team - encourage people to learn from the emergency management Cowichan website and FireSmart program. About to conclude budget deliberations for the year – very hard to choose between the many important projects and services – important to take care of each other, and write letters. They help YOU and they have an impact on decision makers.

Q: Parkland Acquisition Fund? A: Yes, voted to maintain at last year's level, which is the bear minimum. Q: what is being lost? A: CVRD core services are lights on, toilets flushing etc. but so much else is being downloaded to municipalities. Q: Youbou forests? A: 1000ha sequestered with 4 gaps in the map – 2 on the east side have now been logged and the 2 on the west side are being logged now. ~10 ha Q: Shaw Creek? A: No change.

Jim – CLRSS – going to Senior's Center in Town of Lake Cowichan to remove yellow flag iris from the shoreline there. Supporting bat project (Christof).

Q: Who is supporting yellow flag iris work technically? A: have an invasive species committee and people doing reading on it. Genevieve recommends collaborating with Somenos Marsh to learn from it because it's complicated. Not always successful. Consult with Coastal Invasive Plant committee.

Heather Pritchard (and Sarah onscreen) - Quw'utsun Cultural Connections

- Journey of our Generation workshops, with a focus on stewardship groups in February; January workshop was full (~70). 9-4:30. Very impactful – looking at colonization from several different perspectives. Sliding scale for entry fee. Heather “By far the most transformational thing I have experienced myself.” Elders telling their story of the

crimes committed against them, graciously, to a roomful of decedents of the people who did these things. About 18,000 have attended now - REFBC, Inter-cultural society, high school students, VIU forestry students.

- Indigenous Food Night at Bagel and Bannock.
- 2 billion trees contract just signs so more coming up there – Xpey' mapping using climate prediction models. Where can we plant cedar now with the hope, they will still be here 100 years from n

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T'uwahwiye' Philomena Williams - Somenos Marsh Society – needs more volunteers “Bestest in the West”! Fountain of youth – participation keeps us young. Working on Malcolm's Way. You are the Lulumexun Guardians – raise my hands for being part of that, saving nature. How do treat each other – be like that with nature. Without humans, nature would really thrive. How else do we get that feeling of sharing. Be trouble! We need people in droves to have that sharing and caring.

Sunny Mizushima – Lower and SW VI. Cover lots of areas and this is a late one. PSF spring application open until Feb 15; Large wood restoration online workshop coming – free – Feb 13 (in your inbox); Hatchery updates (ask Suni to send from Heather); Fish Kill monitoring work with CWB; Q: Suni will check - -CENC getting eggs? Kevin on parental leave. Karalea filling in.

- PSF spring application intake period open until Feb 15.
- DFO/PSF running a virtual learning series, with an upcoming session on Feb 13 focusing on Large Wood Restoration.

Habitat Restoration team:

- The South Coast Area Restoration team is working with DFO Stock Assessment to install a real-time water quality monitoring station at Skutz Falls.
- This is part of their contribution to the Cowichan Fish Mortality Community Response efforts, coordinated by the Cowichan Watershed Board.
- They've have completed a site visit and are now ordering equipment. We are aiming for a late April/early May install, flow dependent.

- A few hatchery updates:
 - Chum eggs were delivered by DFOs Cowichan Education Coordinator and her two teacher helpers to 12 schools on January 10th from the Cowichan Lake Hatchery. Coho eggs will be delivered to the remaining 5-7 Cowichan schools in the near future.
 - 5-6 Shawnigan schools will get their Goldstream-raised Shawnigan Creek coho eggs delivered on the 21st.
 - Chemainus schools got eggs from the Bush Creek hatchery this year.
 - Three schools have to replace their chillers this year and are running on loaners, with new ones being applied for through PSF.
 - Cowichan River Hatchery has moved all of their Chinook eggs from bulk incubators to heath stacks, they've hatched and are at the alevin stage.
 - Sunny following up on whether Cowichan Estuary Nature Center will receive eggs this year.

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Colleen Terlein – Somenos Marsh Society – [input Phaedra update].
 Volunteer dates on the website.

Barry Hetschko– freelance volunteer, Birds are the word! Birding Counts since beginning November other than Christmas break. Have been asked if there are fewer – yes numbers are a little low. Doubled in the past month. Comox has way more this year. Jan 14 counts were down about ½ in a month but double what they had last year. Last year too – Comox 4-5 x higher than usual and we were low. Expect more increases this week. Bald Eagles – just 12 – they go where the food is. Kestrels increasing – regularly see them. Saw 2 merlin which is unusual. 2 Western Bluebirds spotted Dec 28 and still here. Q: Eagles – 150 at the dump! Q: Christoff – suspects the swans are the same population shifting between Cowichan and Comox – look at those combined to understand the trend. A: Yes. Also, farmers run them off more here, Comox area caters to them more. Q: Roberts Bank fallow fields for migrants – farmers compensated for that. Could we work with the farming community here? Q: Where were the swans before there was farming? A: It was all marshland before we diked for farming.

Jill Thompson - CWB,

- Weir – licensing, operations (Joint Works Agreement), communications. Question – restoration?
- Speaker Series – T'uwahwiye' Philomena Williams opening. Feb – late, March – normal, April/May – early.
- XWP – ongoing effort to address both water use and watershed health
- Fish Kill – thanks Sunny
- Targets Strategy – re-thinking; in progress. WGs and TAC not currently active – not a decision, just a reality that we are trying to recognize and ask “what works now?” to keep collaborating towards our shared aspirational goals.
- Board meetings – open gallery - First Nation Fisheries Council this month.

Stephanie Cottell, online, Cowichan Land Trust – SEHAB meeting in early Feb. Feel free to email updates for her report. Getting going on Maple Mtn broom removal Feb-March then more in summer/fall. Friends of Garry Oak – priority places funding. Connect with landowners around Garry Oak areas – give them stewardship pointers. Funding ends next year. Next month's speaker – Kamloops – Adam's River Salmon Society – Ted Danyluk got a fishing closure like Joe Saysell has been actively trying to achieve in upper Cowichan River. Speaker upcoming. [Genevieve checking Joe is able to attend.]

Bruce Coates, Nature Cowichan, – renamed to Nature Cowichan – Linda Hill at 7:30 tonight. Grief and nature and the relationships thereof. Link at Nature Cowichan webpage. Herring Symposium Thurs Feb 13 in Saanich – big little fish – fantastic event, highly recommends. CVRD meeting agenda tomorrow – push to use VIMC – pushing to address private managed forests, new action alliance will be presenting to CVRD meeting.

Christof Steiger - terrestrial wildlife and habitat biologist. Preoccupied with bat populations, worked on submitting a bat proposal – Species at Risk monster proposal for 5 years would include bat populations and roosting habitat including XPey', wildlife trees, riparian zones, submitted by QCC in October. Update... Fed program, prorogued Gov't – what happens. Approval process carries on until an election is called. Gov't can't spend

money during an election. Feels optimistic that even if the funding is unsuccessful, momentum to work on bats will continue.

Parker Jefferson– updated us on important info from Alex Morton – has collated data on all species in all rivers around VI, WA Puget Sound. (JT check for link in messenger to add). Rebound being seen where fish farms were removed. Ocean conditions also play a role but clear correlation with where fish farms were removed. Q: Is that why our chum increased? A: the rebound here is more likely due to ocean conditions – our chum don't travel to the areas where the fish farms were removed – more due to improving ocean conditions.

https://alexandramorton.typepad.com/alexandra_morton/2025/01/what-did-salmon-just-tell-us.html

Future presentations: Parker will see if Alexander can provide a presentation.

CSRT Presentations today:

- a) CWB – Data Sharing Project Heather and Sarah
- b) Update on Sewage Systems in the Cowichan River – Clay Reitsma and Judith Cullington, MNC, presentation has been emailed out to CSRT list serve

Notes from Jas Sandhu of Town of Lake Cowichan, sent with his regrets: A little run down on what the Town has done and is doing to improve the lagoon effluent. Last year we connected a 3rd cell with holding capacity of 50,000.00 M3 this has helped reduce ammonia and improve effluent quality. We added an Alum injection system to help reduce phosphorus. We have engineers working on a design to upgrade the lagoons adding a screen at the inlet more aeration, phosphorus removal, UV disinfection. The design should be completed soon. This year we are at the present in the process to de-sludge some of the lagoons. This should help improve effluent quality. Adding some more aeration. We are also looking at an BNR plant down the road if funding is available. This could be up in the \$45,000,000 range. We will be looking for Grant funding for this project.

Regards
Jas Sandhu

Sarah Jackman: Heather introduced Sarah Jackman, who is working on a mapping project to move forward on watershed information knowledge and data (WIKD) – knowing where we can find available information to support our work. Pilot project – Data Sharing Plan coordinator.

Sarah graduated from VI forestry program. Worked with Elodie and Farmland Advantage on Xwulqw'selu restoration, then CVRD Firesmart program. Now working with CWB and Farmland Advantage while getting RPF designation, and Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area course. Will be contacting people in the group to add your projects to the 'wicked project'.

Heather shared a slide deck about the project.

- Dots on map show the 'best' data, using criteria such as it being at least 3 years of data, and including some data that isn't on the provincial system yet.
- Who, did what, and where to get that data from.
- Map + bibliography format.
- Contact sarah@cowichanwatershedboard.ca - what do you have that you want to share; what things do you want to see on the map or bibliography?

Shout out to Cheri who started this conversation years ago.

Meeting concluded at noon. Next meeting Feb. 18 with Karalea