

## **Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable (CSRT) Dec. 16, 2025**

### **Attendance:**

Genevieve Singleton (Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable (CSRT))  
Parker Jefferson (CSRT)  
Tim Kulchyski (Cowichan Tribes)  
Jill Thompson (Cowichan Watershed Board)  
Barry Hetschko (Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre)  
Karen Jarvis (local interested citizen)  
David Munday (Shawnigan Basin Society)  
Bruce Coates (Nature Cowichan)  
Ebonie Elliott (Cowichan Tribes)  
Galen McMenemy (CVRD)  
Ellery Jackson-Renz (CVRD)  
Heather Wright (Fisheries and Oceans Canada)  
Emery Sanderson (Cowichan Tribes)  
Jim Deck (Cowichan Lake River Stewardship Society (CLRSS));  
Karen Deck (Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD));  
Heather Pritchard (CWB)  
Joe Saysell (Friends of the Cowichan)  
Julia Kidder (CWB)  
Laurel Circle (Naturalists)  
Chris Steeger (CLRSS)  
Colleen Terlein (SMWS)

### **Attending Online:**

Krista Gooderham (Fisheries and Oceans Canada)  
Jennifer Shepherd (Xwulqw'selu Connections)  
Martha Lescher (Volunteer)  
Francis Guyver (Mosaic)

### **Regrets:**

Katie Mosewich (CVRD), Danni Paydli (CWB), Tom Rutherford (CWB), Eduardo Sousa (Cowichan Tribes).

### **9:00-9:20 am**

1. We are hosted on Cowichan Tribes continuously occupied, unceded territory
2. Appreciation to Fish Health staff and Freshwater Fisheries Society for the use of their meeting room and for providing Zoom access.

3. Appreciation for help for the day
4. Review of notes. Thanks to Mallory for taking notes last meeting.
5. Website. Thanks to Sarah Mullock for keeping this updated. Shaw customer concerns, website etc. renewal will be soon, donations appreciated.
6. Update re Quw'utsun Sta'lo' Skweyul Sept. 21, 2026
7. Reminder to add to Cowichan Watershed Restoration spread sheet sent out.
8. Additions to agenda?

### **9:20-10:40 Round the Table**

Please update us on your activities. Everyone introduces themselves with name and affiliation (it is not necessary to have one) and provides an update of watershed related activities, if they wish. Please remember to be kind and respectful, negativity about other Roundtable members will not be tolerated. We are here to share information. **Everyone is welcome at our meetings.**

#### **Genevieve Singleton (nature interpreter)**

- The Vancouver Island Lamprey is a species at high risk only found in Lake Cowichan, Mesachie and Bear Lake. Genevieve shared the DFO sign that will go up at Gordon Bay Provincial Park, BC Parks will help with the placement.
- There are some possible funds for Lamprey education from DFO.
- Siilh'na'mut Ken Elliott and Genevieve finished their Salmon and the Forest Nature Programmes this month. Their appreciation to the anonymous donor making these programmes possible.
- They both attended the Regional Climate Gathering and provided a nature walk in the rain garden in the parking lot.

#### **Dave Munday (SBS)**

- Shawnigan Basin Society is working on putting together a nearly complete 5-year plan, outlining the objectives of the Basin Society. Their main strategy is 30 by 30, (the goal of preserving 30% of the watershed by 2030).
- Currently they are working on Shawnigan Creek Watershed Management Plan, and are a strategic partner with the CVRD, and receiving some funding from them to support their work.
- SBS has been doing in-water milfoil removal using a venturi pump system and divers. They have put a paper together reporting on the removal process.
- SBS conducts water quality testing in the lake 3x/year alongside CVRD, using a YSI Pro DSS.

- The Society has been doing lots of surveys in the watershed related to the 30 by 30 objective. They are in discussions with Malahat First Nation working towards preservation of forest areas for cultural use.
- SBS has been engaging in water quality work with local students, supporting a St. John's Academy student doing a study on the lake.
- They are also supporting the Koksilah Low Flow working group.

#### **Ebonie Elliott (Cowichan Tribes)**

- Tim Kulchyski introduced Ebonie as the Cowichan Tribes Marine Team's newest member.
- Ebonie wears a lot of hats, and in addition to her work on the Cowichan Tribes Marine Team she is a part of the Anti-Racism Committee, has a role with the social planning group, and is a member of the learning board.

#### **Karen Jarvis (Community Member)**

- Attended the CWB Speaker Night last night. Appreciates attending the meeting.

#### **Galen McMenamin (CVRD)**

- Galen was the speaker at the CWB Speaker Series last night. The evening was well received and there was a lot of engagement and discussion. Galen will be back in January doing a similar presentation at CSRT in January, so more questions can be asked then!
- This past year a Groundwater Monitoring Strategy has been developed, and Galen is now looking at how to carry out and implement this program.
- CVRD is also looking at implementing water conservation rebates and starting to look at irrigation/soil amendments/ other opportunities to incentivize water conservation. A survey on this topic was distributed at the talk last night and will be shared more widely in coming months.

#### **Ellery Jackson-Renz (CVRD)**

- The Surface Water Quality Monitoring Program is all wrapped up for the year. It's been a pleasure working with various partners on water quality monitoring, and thanks to everyone for their support with the program.
- In the New Year Ellery will be on a leave of absence from the CVRD as she begins her master's program. Galen McMenamin ([galen.mcmenamin@cvrd.bc.ca](mailto:galen.mcmenamin@cvrd.bc.ca)) and Katie Mosewich ([katie.mosewich@cvrd.bc.ca](mailto:katie.mosewich@cvrd.bc.ca)) are two alternative CVRD Environmental Services contacts if needed!

#### **Joe Saysell (Friends of the Cowichan)**

- The river level is way up, before these last few days there was an average of 5 rafts/day fishing the Cowichan in front of the house. There is a big pressure on spawning salmon, and these boat anchors are dragging on the redds.
- Joe would gladly take anybody in the spring in the drift boat to show how much anchor scouring is happening and dragging through redds.
- *(Tim added that it's like this all the way down to Sandy Pool).*
- Joe has noticed lots of salmon spawning, up until this last big rain they were still splashing around.
- Joe will have more updates at the next few meetings now that he's back in the area.
- *(Parker added that it has been a disastrous year for chum, normally you can smell them at this time but can't this year).*
- Chinooks spawn in the upper river, because it's the most stable part of the river. This is why it's so important to protect the upper river.
- Joe suggested that CSRT invites a speaker from DFO and MOE to discuss it all these issues together at some point.

#### **Jim Deck (CLRSS)**

- CLRSS is getting information out about invasive species in the upper river and the lake itself. CLRSS will be starting a program in the New Year dealing with yellow flag iris. If this project works, they hope to expand in the future and get all the lake done –this is a difficult job for a small organization, but they're up for the task!
- Planning is underway for next year's Street to Streams Litter Pick Up. There is potential to have it in May, but the big push will likely be for October after River Day.

#### **Karen Deck (CVRD Director, Youbou Area I)**

- Last night at Galen's talk T'uwahwiye' Philomena Williams spoke about how water is life.
- In October of 2018 there was a referendum on the Drinking Water is Protection Plan. Sometimes these important initiatives take decades to unfold. We see how important water is and how much work has to be done, but the priorities have been there since the beginning.
- Everything is connected. We know that now, and some have known all along. The interconnectedness of groups like ours are the only way things are going to change.

#### **Colleen Terlein (SMWS)**

- Colleen shared a "year in review" from Phaedra who could not be here today:
- 2000 volunteer hours.
- 5000m<sup>2</sup> invasive species removed.
- 50m<sup>3</sup> of parrotfeather removed.
- Fish habitat restored.
- 13 different private properties are doing riparian restoration and planting.
- Open air classroom education.

- Salmon watch.
- Water quality testing.
- The work is ongoing, and the area that SMWS covers is vast!
- Volunteers are always welcome!
- The Somenos meadow is now planted, with the help of CVRD.

### **Francis Guyver (Mosaic)**

- Feel free to share Francis' contact info and reach out to him with any questions groups and communities may have relating to Mosaic's work.
- Joe inquired about a specific area in Lake Cowichan where Mosaic may be doing work, Francis and Joe will connect later this week to discuss.  
Francis.Guyver@mosiacforests.com

### **Krista Gooderham (Fisheries and Oceans Canada)**

- Calling in from Comox Territory today. Appreciates attending the meeting.

### **Jennifer Shepherd (Xwulqw'selu Connections)**

- The Xwulqw'selu Connections Team has published an article on Situating Place-Based Watershed Research in the Journal of Community Science. The link will be sent to Genevieve to circulate. This article talks about process of engagement in the project, how the team has worked closely with Cowichan Tribes, and how the work was guided. The team is very grateful to Tim and his family for participating in this project and article.

### **Martha Lescher (Volunteer)**

- Happy to be joining online.

### **Emery Sanderson (Cowichan Tribes)**

- Emery is a referrals advisor at Cowichan Tribes, happy to see everyone. Eduardo sends his regrets; he hopes to be here next month.
- No specific updates, will pass it on to Tim.

### **Bruce Coates (Nature Cowichan)**

- The Nature Cowichan Calendar is getting good pickup. People are starting to use it as a resource.
- The calendar can be reached by typing in "Nature Cowichan", and you will be directed to a calendar of all nature related events in the Cowichan Valley. On average there is an event a day, so take your pick!
- Hopefully this resource can also be used for people planning events, so they can know when may or may not be a good time to plan an event.

- A note on Somenos Marsh fish counting: a few weeks ago, they weren't seeing many fish, but now they're really starting to see them, so hopefully the chum is just late.
- The Duncan Christmas Bird Count will be on Sat. January 3<sup>rd</sup>. An après party will be held in the Fish Health building and be an opportunity to come together and share stories.

### **Heather Wright (Oceans and Fisheries Canada)**

- Heather is the Oceans and Fisheries Canada Community Advisor for Southern Vancouver Island.
- The Cowichan Hatchery came in just under their egg target, all eggs are now incubating and should start hatching soon.
- Heather secured a fish marking trailer to make the tagging process easier and reduce handling and stress on fish.
- The Lake Cowichan Hatchery could not get chum this year. Schools will be supplied with coho instead, egg takes are beginning for that.

### **Barry Hetschko (Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre)**

- Approaching the season of bird counts; the swan count was up to 240 last week which is a good number this time of year. They are hoping to end up with around 500 in Jan/Feb/March.
- On Sunday, the CENC did a coastal bird survey with Kim Lagimodiere from the Cowichan Marine Team.

### **Heather Pritchard (Koksilah Watershed Group)**

- Not in retirement, but in "metamorphosis".
- Heather has returned to the Koksilah Watershed Group as a volunteer.
- They had a really good experience co-hosting an event with Shawnigan Basin Society featuring the film "Trouble in the Headwaters" and discussing the impacts on watersheds through foresting. Themes included forestry, flooding, drought, etc.
- The event had about 100 people there. Heather provided a brief introduction featuring a series of slides of the Koksilah Ecosystem Assessment, discussing how Koksilah watershed went from old growth to a watershed with only 1% of old growth remaining.

### **Tim Kulchyski (Cowichan Tribes)**

- Tim laments not being here for some time now/
- Tim reflected on how the Stewardship Roundtable is such distinct proof with what you can do with a roundtable. If a project is brought forth, and it takes weight with the group, it will move forward.
- Recalled that in 2009 we were down to 500 chinooks. The entire population was almost decimated. This was a cry from the watershed and the chinook population.

- We are not out of the woods by any means. The premise of looking after redds, and looking after fish, are all things that come forward at this table.
- Tim is grateful to Ebonie and Emery for being here as well, it's great to have more Cowichan Tribes representatives at the table.
- We can come together like this and find solutions that work for the long haul. Processes like this have gotten so many important programs going.
- We are beginning to hear Hul'qumi'num' spoken in the heart of Cowichan territory, which is very meaningful.
- It's hard seeing animals in distress as a direct result of our actions. It's troubling that bats or lamprey may not see the same attention and help as other animals that aren't as "charismatic". But it's special coming to this table and seeing the attention put towards these.
- The ability for us in the valley to identify issues in the Koksilah and think "what do we need to do?" results in important work around these issues. This is related to conversations that happen at these gatherings.
- We can't learn things in isolation. The work that happens here is huge, and it's being noticed around the country and the world. This work has resulted in the Watershed Board, in large scale collaboration, and that is noticed. Sticking with these things over time is what makes a difference.

### **Jill Thompson (CWB)**

- Regrets from Tom and Danni. Introducing (in person) Juila Kidder, Communications Lead. CWB is excited to share the work she's done.
- Jill is shifting to focus specifically on CWB targets. She passed around a graphic showing the evolution of their targets.
- Jill shared a Hul'qumi'num' phrase meaning "to help one another with your work and all will benefit", which felt very fitting after Tim's words.
- A few reminders: at the last CWB meeting, the objective to meet a healthy forest target in the coming years was approved.
- Fish kill response follow up: the 2023 fish kill led to coordinating a response, and developing a water quality monitoring regime. Jill circulated last year's report on this work. CWB will be applying to an Eco Action grant to continue this work next year. This monitoring and management must continue until at least a new weir is built.

### **Julia Kidder (CWB)**

- Julia is beginning to recognize a few familiar faces! her heart is really warmed by this collaborative work and the relationships being built here. Knowledge sharing and community accountability that is built here is very important.
- Julia is currently doing her PhD at UBC, looking for ways to reanimate the natural world through mixed communications, and how this can invigorate governance work especially related to fish health.

### **Chris Steeger (CLRSS)**

- Chris has taken on the job of promoting looking at our watershed from a terrestrial perspective. Chris is a terrestrial/conservation biologist and has been presenting on “what a watershed is”.
- Over a year ago alongside the Cowichan Cultural Connections Society, CLRSS applied for a grant to conduct a 5-year research and stewardship project.
- Chris has been a little frustrated with the federal government for taking over a year to respond to the proposal and saying no, stating that there were not enough results in the first year which is why it was turned down.
- What we know is that we have a high bat population in the Valley, and potential for new discoveries!

### **Laurel Circle (Nature Cowichan member)**

- Welcome to Laurel at her first meeting. Her recent award for being volunteer of the year with CVRD Parks was acknowledged. Laurel discussed the importance of protecting the Koksilah River corridor.

### **Parker Jefferson (CSRT)**

- Still getting bats with bugs and mild temperatures! 200-300 hits per night.

### **10:40 – 11 break**

**11-12: Jennifer Moss (Sibbald) will be speaking on Cowichan River Thermal Refuge Mappings - 2025 Project Summary at 10:50. Jennifer is the Restoration Biologist with the DFO Restoration Centre of Expertise-South Coast Area.**

*\*\*\*Note from Joe at end of the meeting: With the new federal government, DFO is anticipating cutbacks. It is crucial to write your MPs, get the attention of the Prime Minister, that we cannot be cutting back funding to Oceans and Fisheries Canada. These fish are too important. Potential for a letter writing campaign? \*\*\**

**12 noon:** Meeting finishes, Holiday luncheon follows

### **Next speakers:**

Jan. 20 Galen McMenamin Senior Environmental Analyst, CVRD speaking on CVRD Drinking Water Plan and Watershed Protection Plan

Feb. 17, Todd Carnahan, Fire Smart

March 17 Kevin Pellett DFO Chinook update