

COWICHAN STEWARDSHIP ROUNDTABLE NOTES

DATE: THURSDAY, APRIL 16: 9am to 12 pm Zoom meeting, invite sent by separate email

www.cowichanstewardship.ca questions write to co-chairs at cowichanstewardshiproundtable@gmail.com

We meet on the lands of Coast Salish peoples. Everyone is always welcome. Please feel free to arrive and leave Zoom meeting whenever is necessary. Sorry, you will have to do your own coffee and treats this time!!

The Roundtable works together in a kind and respectful manner at all times. The Round the Table portion of the meeting consists of all attenders having a few minutes each of a report out time. It is expected that most of us will not have a report out. However, it would be grand if you could share how you are doing in these complicated times. It will be good for us to connect and care for each other.

Please note the Agenda timing is approximate only!

Time	Agenda Item
9:00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Please set up and be ready for meeting by 8:45 am to allow for glitches. ● Welcome and acknowledgement that we meet on Coast Salish peoples' land ● Appreciation to Tom Rutherford of CWB for hosting our meeting. Tom will explain rules and guidelines for using Zoom. ● Regrets: Stephanie Cottrell, Cowichan Land Trust ● Attendance list: Not everyone showed up on screen, so apologies to those I missed! Christine Rikley, Melissa Nottingham, Barry Hetschko, Jacquie Taylor, Erik Piikkila, Brian Houle, Cheri Ayers, Alistair MacGregor, Jacqueline Ronson, Rick Bryan, Genevieve Singleton, Jefferson Parker, Tom Rutherford, Richard Lake, Erik Marshall, Bruce Coates, Joe Saysell, Judith Cullington, Debra Toporowski, Don Hare, John Stewart, Jordan Mahr, Edmond Duggan, Geoff Strong, Tim Kulchyski, Jane Kilthei, Karen Deck, Jim Deck, Lori Iannidinaro, Clay Reitsma, Bruce Coates
9:10-9:20 CSRT Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recording of meeting notes is done by members taking turns. Volunteer is needed for this, only required to take notes of announcements in Round the Table and of discussion points following speaker's presentations. Thank you to Karen Deck for doing this for on the fly zooming along! ● Update re needing a new website manager: Emma Ross of Somenos Marsh Society is doing this for us. Thank you, Emma. Thanks to Edmond Duggan for providing training. ● Payment for Website, Genevieve has paid for this and will make a request for funds at our next in person meeting. ● Terms of Reference is due for discussion. However, since Zoom is a new way for us to meet, we will lay this over for a future meeting. ● Follow up re Freshwater Alliance's presentation at February meeting:

	Genevieve requested that the CSRT join the Fresh Water Alliance. This was approved by the group
	Round the Table , check-ins and updates. Please remember if your report out more than three simple points it must be emailed to secretary or co-chairs if you expect it to be recorded in full in the meeting notes. We expect this part of our meeting will be much shorter than usual, since most of us are not active in the field. Some of you will have updates and it will be nice to hear from everyone how you are doing in these challenging times.
10:30-10:40	Break
10:40-11:15	John Stewart, Engagement Coordinator for Cowichan Tribes speaking on the "Proposed Southern Strait of Georgia National Marine Conservation Area Reserve" presentation has been sent out to list serve.
11:15-11:50	Clay Reitsma, Senior Manager, Engineering, North Cowichan speaking on "Update on Joint Utility Board Sewage Relocation Project".
11:50-12:00	Quick debrief on our thoughts re using Zoom. Thanks everyone for trying out this new way of connecting re our Watershed!
12:00 noon	Meeting ALWAYS ends promptly, thank you.

Meetings are the 3rd Thursday of the month, except August.

Upcoming speakers: May 21, Cheri Ayers, BioAyer Consultants, providing update on Cowichan Coastal Restoration Fund work, and Jane Kiltrei, of Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre speaking on update of Ecoaction Project.

June 18, Kevin Pellett, DFO, update on Cowichan Chinook research

July 16, much hoped for, but time will tell: annual field day at Stoltz Provincial Park

Round the Table notes

Richard Lake – Sidney Anglers- due to COVID they have cancelled their main fundraising event which raises funds for habitat restoration. The speaker season fundraiser is also cancelled. The Cowichan River remains a top priority for them.

Erik Piikkila – Disturbance and Forest Ecologist, Silviculture and Forest Operations-currently working on a project in Grand Forks and a “virtual hike” with Save Our Holmes Society in Youbou.

Eric Marshall- Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society-No meetings currently taking place, but information is coming in from members of the community.

Karen Deck-Save Our Holmes Society-First of bi-monthly newsletters going out to the community. Thanks to Tom for providing facts about the weir. Erik Piikkila will be working on a virtual hike in Ladysmith with a Youbou videographer. These initiatives are in the funding agreement with Lush.

Bruce Coates-Cowichan Valley Naturalists-he is on the working group for North Cowichan Forest Review and Public Participation. He spoke briefly about a proposal to renew logging in the community forests; putting the “pause” aside due to revenue challenges in North Cowichan.

Brian Houle-Catalyst-The lake is 86% full, with 25cms release flow until the end of April. Weather forecasts are not consistent, but if overall dry weather continues, it may be necessary to reduce flow to 20cms after that followed by 15cms from May to June and 7cms for the rest of the dry season.

Christine Rikley-BC Parks- Ranger Dan DellaVedova is back as of April 1, which will help with the workload. BC Parks are closed until further notice due to the huge influx of visitors. The sheer numbers were large and beginning to impact First Nations and neighbouring communities. Ecosystems were also starting to suffer as people went off trails to avoid close contact with others. The closure doesn't apply to staff or Indigenous Peoples practicing ceremonial and other traditional practices while following COVID guidelines. Exemptions around protection of infrastructure, critical operations, capital projects would continue on a case by case basis. Nothing would be done without consultations with First People is paramount.

Tom Rutherford-CWB-New weir status: Stantec staff (2 in Toronto 3 in Victoria) are working on this project. Hard engineering is good to go. Tricky issues remain; natural boundaries and the water license. LeRoy van Wieren is in charge of the project. In-season management of the weir is ongoing.

- Tom spoke briefly about the Koksilah Water Sustainability Plan. Section 88 was invoked last year and was hard on the farmers.
- As part of CWB's Target Review, Heather Pritchard is working on targets for Riparian Indicators.

Dave Preikshot-North Cowichan- Is recovering from COVID. WE are very glad to see him feeling better. N. Cowichan offices are closed except for essential staff. The environmental group is working remotely on updating the climate action plan. With the goal of zero emissions, the group is working on the engagement process, policy and management, early modelling results and reports. .

- Working on the zeolite project on Quamichan Lake. Zeolite is a porous mineral which can adsorb and absorb organic phosphorus, acting like a sponge. Bags of it are placed on racks or trays in the water. It is not intended to work on phosphorus already in the lake, but is meant to reduce inputs of phosphorus. It lacks peer review studies, so information gathered will be useful for others. As well, equipment that will take samples of oxygen and temperature in the lake have arrived. The intention is to monitor phosphorus related conditions and data will start coming in soon. No zeolite will be placed until conditions dry up for fish.

Debra Toporowski-Cowichan Tribes-spoke about the challenges that she and other Cowichan Tribe members are experiencing with COVID. Finding alternate ways to communicate, ensuring that those experiencing greater hardship get the help they need and seeking information regarding small businesses hurt by the shutdown are among the issues she spoke about. The crisis is compounded for elders and others who have experienced trauma, lack clean water or cannot connect with their community.

Geoff Strong-Atmospheric Climate Scientist-An upcoming of the Canadian Meteorological and Atmospheric Society has been cancelled. The next meeting, on climate change, would deal with government policy on the climate. They hope to have James Hanson, a climate expert from the U.S. speak. His latest book is "Inconvenient Pipeline". He is pleased to see intergovernmental cooperation to tackle COVID and wishes the same could be done for the climate change.

Rick Bryan-Paddle Sports- All clubs have closed for trips and instruction. Discussions around what is okay and not okay to do are ongoing. Outdoor recreation has benefits for mental health. It must occur, though, without endangering others. He has no boats on the river right now.

Tim Kulchyski-Cowichan Tribes-As his meetings occur more and more on line, Tim is becoming more familiar with Zoom. He and other office workers have had to step up to take on more responsibilities. There is currently no land manager.

- The Salish Sea Initiative: Focus on Killer Whales; an Indigenous presence in the Gulf Islands. Marine Guardians are using zoom and other platforms to communicate these days.
- Flows are a big issue and he and Tom are meeting to discuss this. Jared Williams and others are stepping up to help the community.
- Tim has been asked to come up with a question for Water Alliance's Trivia Night, a country wide opportunity to learn about water.

Joe Saysell-Friends of the Cowichan-Fry rescue will be a challenge this year due to social distancing rules. Joe spoke about the importance of a closure of the upper river over the winter from 70 mile Trestle to the weir. Salmon, Steelhead and Trout spawn from December through to the end of March. Their redds are being trampled by waders. He is doubtful that we'll see fingerlings this year.

- As for flows, he would prefer to see high water in the spring than in the summer and fall; 25cms through to May 1 is preferable. Then inch by inch thereafter.
- A developer has taken out the woods on the way out of town beside Stanley Creek toward Highway 18. Joe is very concerned that damage to the riparian area will put creeks feeding the upper river at risk.

Jacque Taylor-Cowichan Bring Back the Bluebird Project-COVID has also prevented contact with nest box hosts and trail monitoring, although some are still accessible. The birds are coming back, though.

Barry Hetschko-Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society-they are keeping 2 employees in their paid positions as long as they can. Eric Marshall is the new IBA caretaker for Cowichan Bay since Dave Aldcroft has retired from doing it for many years.

Don Hare-Coastal Invasive Species Council-As monitoring and treating invasive species is seen as essential, their work continues except for education and outreach. They're treating private lands, but are not going to individual home owners because children are out in the yards these days. There is an explosion of calls around Poison Hemlock and Giant Hogweed. They are working with Mosaic along the Cowichan River.

Lori Iannidinaro-CVRD Area D-There are looping trails that are accessible and can be used while using social distancing. No washrooms are available. The Saanich Inlet Protection Society Round Table is postponed.

Cheri Ayers-Coastal Restoration Fund- projects are rolling along. Field work is tricky. Stoltz and riparian areas of Koksilah and Cowichan have been postponed. The restoration project monitoring eel grass was significantly impacted due to winter storm. This puts into question the value of doing another project, if so much work can be undone by one storm. The riparian plants in the estuary need to be watered, which is going to be tricky.

Alistair MacGregor-MP-Constituency offices are closed to public walk-ins. Phones and emails are to be used in case of need. Anxiety and uncertainty abounds, so the office is working on providing information and case management; i.e., benefits, wage subsidies, and funds for negatively impacted people. Parliament will probably not have regular meetings until May or June. Watershed issues, anchorages and weir are on the back burner for now.

Melissa Nottingham-DFO/ Salmon Enhancement Society-School programs: fish have been released earlier than usual. The release locations have changed due to BC Parks closures, but now it's just the teacher releasing fish, so venue is not so important. Teachers are making videos to share with their children. Hatcheries: also released fish early. Tagging has stopped. They may mark some smolts. Decisions will be made depending on COVID status.

Sandy Cumming, Cowichan Lake River Stewardship Society- Some of the salmon in the elementary schools are being fed by principals. Coho are not being released. It's too early.

Jane Kilthei- Estuary Nature Centre-Restoration Projects are postponed. Environment Canada has been flexible around funding carrying on over to another fiscal year. Youth Training is on line, presented by Peter Gibbs. The Nature and Science Summer Camp is possibly going ahead but on-line. For B"earth" Day ENC is asking for a 1 to 3 minute video from those who've had a learning opportunity at ENC.

Jordon Mahr-Quilhanumutsun- providing technology and biology expertise to Nations within the Hul'q'umi'num' language speaking area.

Genevieve Singleton- -hoping for the annual Bluebird Beer and Burger fundraiser on 15 of November. So very happy to see everyone online and missing her nature walk season.