

Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable



July 18, 2013

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Paul Rickard at 9 am.

In attendance

Meg Loop (CLT), Keith Lawrence, Ann Kjerulf & Kate Miller (CVRD), Tracy Michalski & Ron Derrick (FLNRO), Derek Haupt & Makenzie Leine (Western Forest Product), Brain Houle (Catalyst), Lorne Duncan, Ian Morrison & Lori Iannidinaro (CVRD), Alan martin & Ted Brookman (BCWF), Dave Lindsay & James Hood (Timberwest), Claude Theriault & Ken Clements (Sidney Anglers), Ben Skougaard & Catherine Macey (Jean Crowder M.P), Cathie Woodrow & D'archy Lubin (Youbou), Eric Marshall (CVNS), George Croy (CERCA), Robin Lawson (CERCA), Beate Weber-Schuerholz and Goetz Schuerholz (CERCA), Tim Kulchski & Helen Reid (Cowichan Tribes), Genevieve Singleton (Nature Interpreter), Tom Rutherford (DFO), Rodger Hunter (CWB),

Regrets: Parker Jefferson, Don Closson, Gerald Thom, Marlene Caskey, Brian Riddell, Alan Magnan, Bonnie Antcliff

Approval of Minutes

The minutes were circulated from the June 20th meeting and approved.

Roundtable updates

Kate Miller - summer water quality assessment across the Cowichan and Shawnigan Basin to begin.

Sidney Anglers - Has a small fund for salmon enhancement projects, email with request.

Timberwest - Marmots are doing quite well in the southern region of the Island. 2 goshawk nests within the Cowichan.

Ted Brookman - Section 61 of the fisheries act, know it before you fish.

Meg Loop - Eelgrass restoration project to take place in Cowichan Bay August 15 – 17th, looking for volunteers. August 13th at 6:30 pm public presentation on eelgrass at the Nature Centre.

Genevieve Singleton - Bring back the Bluebird project, at least 28 bluebirds sighted. Upper River clean up Aug 17, Lower River clean-up Aug 18, planning River Day activities for the clean-up dates.

Paul Rickard - Recently met with Mark Zacharias to begin asking questions on the Cowichan Estuary Management Plan. Plan states that the Ministry of Environment (FLNRO) has the power and authority to administrate the plan, still in effect.

Business

Watershed Board Updates - Rodger Hunter

Resilience Workshop by the POLIS project and evening presentation took place last month. The workshop was looking at creating resilient state of being on multiple scales. Putting forth a project to look at area-based Environmental Farm Plans to increase subsidy money available for environmental work to take place on farms. Cowichan had 4 applications for DFO's recent grant work. The Watershed Board will be a society soon, likely within the next meeting. Having politicians on the board can be challenging for charitable status. Water conservation will be presented to local governance to try and bring in larger water conservation programs for next summer. Hope to have 4 or 5 field trips over the summer. Working on a watershed display for the Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre, actively fundraising for that project.

- BC museum is very interested in helping financially with CERCA's estuary knowledge program for next year. Potential to link up with the NC.

DFO Recreation Funding

CVRD argued that local government money is raised through local taxation, thus does not stack onto the Federal contribution amount. Sandy Pools is a popular boating put in spot; the site is now degraded and would need work to deal with change in geometry and erosion. Solutions will come forward for recreational beach use, boating, and fish values community based feedback and solutions. Partnered with the BCWF for this proposal.

- 5 acres downstream of Sandy Pools has been acquired by the regional district and is now a park.
- Feedback for DFO: time was not realistic for leveraging those kinds of funds, and the application form crashed many times. Regional DFO will be drafting a response to Ottawa for the difficulties.
- DFO will have another round of funding, likely in October. We can prepare now for another intake of applications. Over half the proposals from BC came from the Island.

Shaw Creek Subdivision - Rodger Hunter

Upper end of Cowichan Lake, Shaw creek is a historical location of very large cutthroat trout up to 6-8 lbs, and very important to early chinook salmon, and coho. Shaw is now is a shadow of its former self. The owners are proposing a subdivision around Shaw creek and the mouth. 4 lots for sale 2.56 million, biologically was identified as a high priority area for biological activity and for Cowichan Tribes it was very important.

Water Balance Model Tool for Stream Health - Kate Miller

How do we deal with storm water management, rather than regulate it directly? BC living Water smart. Georgia Basin Inter-Regional collaborative, developing place based decision policies and tools for a large geographical area. Design with nature approach, looking to implement green infrastructure (rather than pipes), trying to mimic the water balance model prior to development of the area. Communities can reduce risk, restore stream/watershed health. Urban development must function hydrologically like natural systems, using a design with Nature approach to shift the current engineered approach to one of emulating natural systems. Developed 3 online interfaces for learning: planning, engineering, and for the landowner. The Water Balance Model Express for Landowners empowers land owners to make better stream health choices based on their property.

- The general CVRD site has more of the Why around streams and watershed health.

Dyking Project Updates – Kate Miller

Tender for the protective works on south side of the river just released. Largely set-back dykes except for minor erosion control using riprap on the Hatchery Dike (to protect fish complexing area). Work from Mission road to hatchery road will be starting next week and completed before December. In addition two gravel management/removal sites will be developed: site 6 north arm plug- was emergency removal last year, now going back in to remove and additional 15,000 cubic meters and developing a deep channel with pools and riffles, placing LWD for cover and habitat. We know site 6 will always be a gravel trap and will require ongoing maintenance. Sill feature to be installed at the bifurcation at north and south arm; this sill will allow some control over having one wetted channel rather than not enough in both. At the second site (site 1 adjacent to the black bridge) 18,000 cubic meters will be removed, this is the first drop zone in the lower system, and another site where major long term sediment management will occur. Gravel will be stored to sit behind the playing fields. We need to find a way to manage the 3 major inputs into the system in the upper river (Broadway run being one).

- Trying to figure out the best access to Broadway Run. Would have to be opposite side of the river as it is a very unstable bank. Potential failure site, meaning it can create a damn or a large flow of sediment into the river.
- With support from BC Conservation Foundation it is become another poster-child for doing the best you can with a job that must be get done. The sedimentation management was identified as high risk to deal with fish challenges. Sediment management will matter to Western Forest and offer an opportunity to link for future processes.

New Rule Curve Update - Brian Houle

Even if we don't get more rain, the new curve is helping. Today we are at 7.15 cms, rather than 15 cms same date. The lake level will drop more slowly as we go into August and September. Lake level drops at 1 cm per day. The previous rule curve had lake level dropping faster than expectation.

Impacts on the Integrity of the Cowichan Estuary - Goetz Schuerholz

Paul Rickard: The dredging and scope was a surprise to many of us, this has led to a lot of discussion. Some photographs have been taken to show the process. Western Forest Products really did a legal and reasonable job in going through process as they saw it - Depend on DFO for fisheries advice. DFO approved and authorized the dredging, WFP has DFO and Cowichan Tribes on site observing the dredging. We are now focusing on respectfully moving forward looking at teaming up and sharing expertise. There is angst in the general community over the dredging; the speed that it occurred from an outside perspective, and the dredging was outside of the normal fishery window. There are very small, very stressed fish out in the estuary right now (June 19 there were a lot of fish out there), and with the dredging more stress is put upon them.

Goetz Schuerholz: Three issues - dredging an active river channel, grounded log booms (microphytobenthic biofilm, carbon sequestration), and logs within the salt marsh.

- The road for access was widened and impacted intertidal pools within the estuary. These pools are critical to life, and quite a few were taken out of productivity by the road expansion. Who owns the land the road was built on?
- A temporary bridge was created out of rip rap dumped into the estuary. Road built by dredged material, will this road and rip rap be removed?
- Dredged materials being stored on old material storage site. What is to happen with this material? Contaminates leaching? Will the temporary road and rip rap be removed?
- License of Occupation on Lot 160: 4.1 store all log bundles in water of sufficient depth to prevent grounding, no blocking the river channels. Since Aug 2012 have been grounding out.
- Intertidal mudflats contribute 50% of the primary production of estuaries. Diatoms form the base of the food chain and create a biofilm on top of the mud. The top centimeter of mud is storing CO₂ as sugars into the mud. WFP grounding log booms 4.2 ha daily at low tide are destroying the biofilm and lost daily for carbon sequestration.
- Salt marshes: Many logs washed up during storm events from the mill and have been for a very long time. These logs are decomposing and not allowing the marsh vegetation to function and sequester large amount of carbon.
- Hurdles to Overcome: lack of communication amongst stakeholders, poor understanding of the goods and services of the estuary; lack of transparency in decision-making processes regarding the estuary; poor government accountability; insufficient law enforcement in estuary.

Roundtable comments re CEEMP and CEEMC

- CERCA is observing a very minimalist approach by DFO in regards to ensuring estuary health. Historically (70s & 80s) a lot of conflict between industry and environmental communities. The plan refers to the fact "as new knowledge comes along, the plan may need to be amended or reviewed". Since 1987 we have gained a lot of knowledge in regards to mudflat production, salmonid habitat (90% or more of the mortality happens in the first 2 months of life, including estuary habitat). Exploring where do we go from here?
- WFP – As far as the OAC goes, Western Forest Products is complying with grounded log booms within the intertidal zone. The OAC as it gives legal force to above and beyond the plan. The approval for dredging was a 2.5 year process, did not know there was a forum to discuss this process such as the CSRT. The infrastructure and the bridge were put in instead of a pipe /infill through the active river channel. Historically the pipe was used; the bridge was seen as a positive change worth additional expense. The extra road material was dredge, and deconstruction will take place once the dredging is complete. 70% complete in sediment removal, and then installing fish habitat compensation.
- FLNR - OAC. The plan has resulted in improved environmental conditions within Cowichan Estuary, especially the industrial face.
- The Cowichan Estuary Management Committee is a bunch of local governments (CT, CVRD, etc) that are involved in commenting and inputting on decisions. In the priorities of the government, does the Cowichan Estuary rank high enough to make changes? What user groups should be on that committee? Environmental groups? Industrial presence? Involving a broader spectrum of the community in the committee could potentially accelerate or decelerate a decision making process.
 - First thing that needs to be figured out is who is actually in charge? Whose baby is this? FLNR was structured to be the operational arm, MoE tasked with looking after policy and act as intergovernmental liaison. Willing to help put the process of plan revision forward, but higher ups will make the decision if to revise the plan.

- The mill has a long history of dredging, 5 dredging ago the material was just dumped out over eelgrass. The 3rd dredging ago a new process was developed to take that inland and store it. Huge improvement for estuary health.
- Since the plan, there have been changes in the bedload within the estuary, climate change was not a dialogue in the 1980s, this new knowledge needs to be incorporated into the plan.
- Warning - The province did not take up the plan in the 80s since industry did not get involved until the plan was on the Environment Minister's desk and the plan was viewed as diminishing opportunities. Industry got very upset and the plan was never brought into effect because of this pressure.
- The plan has a significant political power in order and council. The Ministry did not have the funds for the meetings/minutes and organizational process. CVRD now funds this process thus the CVRD already has a role.
- Lori Iannidinardo- Through the process of the OCP, the estuary was high priority, and Industry was getting a bit nervous as Cow Bay is a working bay. How do we include industry to approach the same goals, as the communities were built by fishing and farming? Potential for the CEMC to be this link.
- Tim Kulchyski - Cowichan is quite interested in maintaining the resources of the estuary, and not just being an ad hoc participant, but in developing full partnerships and innovative outlooks.
- Tom Rutherford - Not a regulatory biologist, and not an academic, and doesn't run industry. Issues like this are all about communication. Reminiscent of the issues with Catalyst - DFO and sediment in the River. Sediment management needs to be a long term goal collectively. Major shifting in governance, capacity peaked in the mid-90s. Senior management organizations are on the downslide, we are lucky to live in a community that has local government able to step to the plate. We can do better in estuary management. Is the CWB an appropriate pre-existing tool for sediment management?
- Ron Derrick - Facilitation role put people together and facilitate a dialogue that is taken back to government etc venues (BCCF, MoE Water Management, CVRD OCP, CEMC) to advise on decision making. Do we need to change the committee or find a way to encourage the dialogue that informs the committee? Tracy - Is there a subcommittee that looks at how to move forward with all the stakeholders? It is such a big issue with many knowledgeable people.
- WFP - Have done a bit of explorative work around how to do things better. Totally open to helping upstream, connecting with CT and working with them for solutions that are mutually beneficial.

Next Meeting

September Meeting: officials will not be here on the 3rd Thurs. Potential date change because of this.