

Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable



December
19, 2013

MINUTES

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

In attendance

Meg Loop & Kai Rietzel (CLT), Shona Smith (DFO), Keith Lawrence, Kate Miller & Emily Doyle-Yamaguchi (CVRD), Paul Rickard & Ted Brookman (BCWF), Klaus Kuhn, Jean Athunson & Gerald Thom (CLRSS), Parker Jefferson (One Cowichan), Ange Hill & Andrew Cornell (DFO –SCH), Catherine Macey (Jean Crowder MP), Rodger Hunter (CWB), Nan Goodship, Ray Demarchi & Jenny Ferris (CERCA), Claude Theriault & Ken Clements (Sidney Anglers), Ian Morrison (CVRD Area F), Kerry Davis (Green Party of BC), Dave Lindsay (Timberwest), Tracy Michalski (MLNRO – Fish & Wildlife), Ken Epps (Island Timberlands), Eric Marshall (CVNS), Shari Willmott (Island GIS), Ted Leischner (Plan Bee Now), Jen George & Tim Kulchyski (Cowichan Tribes), Don Closson (BC Parks), Derek Haupt (Western Forest Products), Evan Croteau & Raimund Mullin (Lake Cowichan School), Clay Reitsma & Shaun Chadburn (North Cowichan),

Regrets: Al Martin, Helen Reid, McKenzie Lane,

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the October meeting were circulated and approved.

Roundtable updates

Nick Varsteg - February 19th, 7 pm, premier of "Resilience" of the Cowichan Rive Valley. \$7 get your tickets at the Cowichan Theatre Box Office

Ted Brookman - Dealing with DFO and the changes to the fisheries act, how to get better funding formulas out there.

Ken Clements - Gave \$13,000 away, another \$13,000 to give away in January

Nan Goodship - Developing a project to mesh science and art

Ray Demarchi - Project for breaching the causeway built in 1925 to restore hydrological function to the estuary.

Ian Morrison - May be some change with some of the committees within the board

Dave Lindsey - Standard forestry practices, trying to work on some initiatives in Shaw Creek/Heather Mountain but nothing concrete to report.

Traci - Region One Fisheries to open up discussion around recreational fisheries, to be discussed further at the February meeting.

Marshall - Sawn & Goose Count: number of swans and geese were down, but this week they have gone up. More bald eagles (184) than swans (174). DFO is consolidating libraries in two places (Pat Bay & Dartmouth), Eric was largely responsible for the Eric Marshall library in Manitoba.

Kai Rietzel - Sharp-tailed snakes. Rec Fish.

Meg Loop - PSF grant

Keith Lawrence - Sandy Pool, involving a number of different stakeholders. REQUEST: Support on a couple different fronts, fish salvage, enviro monitoring, planting riparian species (plant donations), construction services (delivery of rip rap),

Jennifer George - Helen Reid

Kate Miller - Sea level rise impact analysis for the eastern coastline has been completed and looking at in 2014 the verification of the key pieces of infrastructure along that coast. Also looking at notification in January with success or not for the next phase of dyking in the industrial park. Currently in discussion with the other partners for compensation (breach south side dyke to support the productive side channels). Developing a map of green infrastructure, updated and detailed map of watercourses and riparian infrastructure based on the recent LIDAR and other GIS work.

Parker Jefferson - Successful training last month, over 4,000 supporters. Able to offer services to groups in the area that may need some public attention. Three levels: 1) Ad hoc support 2) Partner with local groups for in-depth, 3) bigger items could get a working group. Need to have clear goals and deadlines to request support for local projects.

Genevieve Singleton - Bluebirds Project will be gearing up again in March, GOERT needs to do more fundraising for the project. Eagle Heights, pristine grasslands, by bringing it to the group we are able to work together to make new connections and energy.

Paul Rickard - Members of the BC Lake Stewardship Society, it is a group membership that covers everyone in the group. Covers us or projects with insurance. www.bclakestewardshipsociety.com

Rodger Hunter - Rick Nordeen made a formal presentation to Gerald Thom for being the Lake Steward of the Year. The water is worryingly low, having to dig channels through deltas so fish can get up the creeks. Shaw Creek, got approval from the owner to get access to the conservation data on the Shaw Creek property, hoping to forward that on to Nature Conservancy. Been trying to get the Ministry up to the snow course to get a snow pillow, we may just see if Dave Thompson will work with us to put one in. VIHA has agreed to allow a water quality test before the Polar Bear swim, Rodger will be taking that sample this week. VIHA also agreed to a 5 week winter sampling regime in the Bay starting in January. Working with the farmers engaged in the Environmental Farm Plan, they are all very positive response. Forum on January 26 - 29. Chief Chip Seymour will be the new co-chair of the Cowichan Watershed Board, two new members from Cowichan Tribes. January 16th, climate change talk with Richard Hebda. \$200,000 from the BC Real Estate Foundation, the money is for taking out a license and allow a 20cm increase (a change in the operating procedures). CVRD & Cowichan Tribes looking at jointly taking out the licence. FLNRO is interested in assistance for the implementation of the Cowichan Estuary Environmental Management Plan, in discussions for the CWB to take on that role and if there is money. Part of the money is going towards communication around water issues in the Lake. Cowichan Estuary is the only one in the province that has this order in council.

Business

Cowichan Lake Shoreline Stewardship Project – Gerald Thom

First cooperative effort with the high school was water sampling with Deb Epps along the Cowichan river during the summer and Lake Cowichan. Oliver creek is by the old gas station contamination site, trying to track all the sites for contamination. The results of the summer sampling showed nothing of real concern in the lake, a few sites of concern. Some of the inlet streams have quite high fecal coliform counts. Meade Creek, Shaw Creek were a little high, but Beaver Creek was very high. Numbers are much better than for the Koksilah and Cowichan Bay. The Highschool students were instrumental for the fall 5-week samplings.

Saywell park is downtown Lake Cowichan. Himalayan blackberry was taking over the foreshore. Started with Lake Cowichan to mow all the blackberries down. With volunteers kept clipping the blackberries down. A new dock was installed to allow recreational use of the area without trampling of the riparian zone. The high school students donated \$5,000 cash to make the dock happen. Lots of volunteer support in the replanting of the riparian zone, 25 volunteers to plant 750 plants, second day had the high school students another 400 plants. 800 square meters of restoration and planting.

Restore 1km of waterfront and protect 15kms of shorefront. The idea is to work with the highschool, at least one university summer student, to start restoration in July/August. Hope to do 400m of private lakefront restoration. One of the homeowners built a retaining wall, he started out quite negatively but now is planning to move his home back, remove the wall, and remove the boat ramp. This homeowner is now excited about revegetation. We hope to coordinate efforts across local, provincial, federal governments and homeowners/volunteers, trying to get adjacent homeowners to participate for larger restorations. Created signs for homeowners who have been doing a good job of protecting their riparian zones, or have been involved in restoration to recognize those doing it right. 70% of the shoreline around the lake is in pretty good shape. This 3 year program is a good step towards protecting and restoring.

Nicole Bouchei - Created a Lake Stewardship program, allows the grade 11 and 12s able to do work with the Stewardship Group, about 12 students consistently excited. Linking in to the curriculum to include riparian work, hoping to create a block of time in the schedule for dedicated time for the Stewardship group. There is a community garden out back, and a few students are interested in creating a native plant nursery. Independent Directed Studies, grade 10 -12, kids get 4 graduation credits. Hoping to get a credited course called Lake Studies.

- Jenny Ferris, how do we connect Shawnigan Lake to Ladysmith.

Cowichan Valley Pollinator Stewardship Project – Meghan Loop & Ted

Bees

Small Craft Harbours – Andrew

National branch of DFO, work with partners across the country. Harbour Authority, volunteer not-for-profits. Slightly over 100 pacific harbours. The Cowichan Bay Fisherman's Wharf is our local harbour authority. Proposed Timber Wharf Reconstruction Project:

- Plan to replace a portion of the existing timber approach that is deteriorating (current version dates to 1960s). Improve safety for harbour users, improve access for fisheries loading and unloading. Remove aging infrastructure and install inert concrete structures that will have a longer life cycle.

The concrete float will have a larger footprint, but the walkway will be transparent. For the fishermen, they have short and far apart windows of use of the wharf, however, only one can offload at a time. Refrigeration trucks get backed up on land. The new concrete float will allow multiple offloading to speed up the process. These floats allow soft foreshores to protect the habitat. An environmental baseline has been done so we know the ecological base now. There has been a shift from waterfront fish processing facilities, to trucking from wharfs.

- Major capital funding, the last year of a Large Scale Floating Wharf program.
- Why expanding services in Cow Bay? Why chose that location?
 - The fish industry is a part of the tourism of cow bay. Having a safe tourist aspect to the new float is part of the plan. Fisherman don't have many places to offload anymore, Cow Bay is one of the few places they are able to do so now. Are there more appropriate place? WESCAN terminal?
 - Cumulative effects analysis, 2004 the floating breakwater and rock breakwater for ongoing baseline monitoring of the bay, ongoing monitoring of eelgrass restoration projects. CVRD to connect over this.
 - The scope is the walkway/ramp and float. The money will run out after this wharf project, there is intent for further projects but no money for the vision.

Cowichan Bay Floathomes - Anne & Emily

CVRd is making progress in terms of getting float homes connected to the Cowichan Bay sewer systems, the capacity is there within the plant. Floathomes and live-a-boards are recognized as a legitimate use, but now working on by-laws so that the dwellings themselves are connected to services and safe to occupy. Met with the residents and went through the bylaws and regulations. Permitting usage but subject to conditions.

Creating better understanding of what we are working towards. There have been environmental concerns that needed to be addressed. The last meeting with the community there was considerably more positive attitude by residents to support sewer hookup to reduce the inputs to the bay.

Still working on greywater systems for live-a-boards, a tank that can be drained? The fecal coliforms in greywater can be as high as sewage. It is of equal concern. 11 floathomes, variable live aboards. Each marina would have a sewage collection hookup to take and move out the sewage. Its not always that the marinas would have a pump out. If the marina has floathomes and liveaboards will have to have sewage pumpouts.

CERCA – Jenny Ferris

Would like to have a full-day event next summer. Are there any events happening early summer 2014 that could tie-in to this Estuary Event. Mobile exhibit in the planning and building phase with the RBC museum. Symposium on selected estuary topics. Afternoon visits to the estuary by boat or land. CERCA would like input from other organizations. Add to the idea, synch dates, or support. Mandate to raise knowledge of the health of the estuary.

- February meeting get more time for more work.

Eagle Heights Grass Lands – Paul Rickard

Twenty years ago there was a suggestion to add the Eagle Heights area to the park, 10hecatce grassy knoll area and buffer area. This buffer is most likely old growth, limestone karst very important cultural resource with important plant life. This is the richest grassland of its type on Vancouver island. Owned by Island Timberlands. BC Parks acquisitions this was 2005-6's highest priority. IT's assessment is now 3.5 million dollars. This file is no longer available to Parks, the minister has to put this file back on the table. The CVNS, Cowichan Tribes have written a letter, Wildlife Federation will be meeting with the minister at the end of January. Tim and Luschiem (Arvid Charlie) will come to that meeting, and the minister needs to give Ian Atherton \$30,000 to bring this project back. Island Timberlands met with Cowichan Tribes and they are receptive. Ian Atherton is the guy at parks that can make this happen.

Miracle Creek – Paul Rickard

This time of year the water level should be many feet higher. Volunteers dug a channel for water to flow through the gravel. This creek should have 50 coho spawning, but there is currently none. Almost enough water to get up the creek, massive de-watered areas. Almost considering needing to go on control at the weir the water levels are so low. In 2000 had to go on control twice (dec & feb), current lake levels are at August Levels. Chinook are in the main channel flow, right now the steelhead still need to spawn in their redds or they will be dry.

ACTION: The co-chairs will draft a letter to DFO regarding the difficulties with the RFCPP application process and our concerns with them.

Next Meeting

October 17th.

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