

MINUTES

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

In attendance

Meg Loop & Kai Rietzel (CLT), Keith Lawrence & Kate Miller (CVRD), Paul Rickard & Ted Brookman (BCWF), Klaus Kuhn & Gerald Thom (CLRSS), Parker Jefferson (One Cowichan), Jean Crowder (MP), Rodger Hunter (CWB), Ray Demarchi (CERCA), Ken Clements (Sidney Anglers), Ian Morrison (CVRD Area F), Molly Hudson (Timberwest), Tracy Michalski (MLNRO – Fish & Wildlife), Ken Epps (Island Timberlands), Eric Marshall (CVNS), Shari Willmott (Island GIS), Helen Reid & Tim Kulchyski (Cowichan Tribes), Don Closson (BC Parks), Derek Haupt (Western Forest Products), Shaun Chadburn (North Cowichan), Barry Cron (Commercial Fisherman), Maria Fustic & Berit Beattie (Brentwood College), Craig Wightman (BCCF/Living Rivers), Brian Houle (Catalyst Paper), Genevieve Singleton (Nature Interpreter), Debra Toporowski (MLA Bill Routley's Office/ Cowichan Tribes Councilor), Cody Kowliuk & Ronnie Gunn (Rep River Quest), Bob Crandall (CLSES), Elizabeth Bailey (Somenos Marsh), Nikki Wright (SeaChange), Kitty Lloyd (Saanich Inlet Protection Society), Dick Beamish (Retired Scientist).

Regrets: Tom Rutherford, Arthur Martin

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the January meeting were circulated and approved.

Roundtable updates

Keith Lawrence - Sandy Pool project in design phase, geomorphological and habitat concerns, looking at river migration moving through alluvial fan. Water management and governance review will be taking place through 2014.
Genevieve - Bring Back the Bluebird Project will be starting up again, year 3 of introducing bluebirds back to CV since 25 year extirpation. Eagle Heights, both Cowichan Tribes has had good meeting with deputy minister of parks. Lorie Hall will be coming to CV on March 14th for a meeting.

Ian Morrison - In conjunction with Cowichan Tribes, CVRD are moving forward with a water license application.

NDP - Bill is back in house and will be dealing with the Water Act, willing to connect folk with members of house.

Kai Rietzel - Upcoming events. March 7 - 8 Bioengineering Workshop with Dave Pollster. Received funding from DFO's Rec Fish, we based our application on reports by Ted Burns etc. The reports are old and we need a new site to do livestock fencing and planting along Bings Creek - looking for interested home owners. Need to do bank stabilization on Avril if anyone knows of any sites please let us know.

Ray - CERCA participated in a Cowichan Estuary Environmental Management Committee meeting. Currently a minimum population of 400 seals in the bay. The WesCan terminal breach grant approved by Pacific Salmon Foundation. This will put in a bridge and reconnect the Koksilah and Cowichan River within the estuary.

Jean Crowder - Wrote the minister of Fisheries & the Environment, requested to cough up money for supporting local water control, was told it was not a Federal issue and to go to the Province. Federal budget has no good news for fisheries, what funds there is will be supporting recreational fisheries.

Rickard – RFCPP has been given an additional 15 million for another 2 years. One area still of concern moving forward is for DFO to change the definition of government to exclude local municipalities so organizations are able to use this money for leveraging.

Nikki Wright - Transplant of eelgrass tomorrow at 1 pm (meet at Hecate Park). Good news on the summer's planting.

Timberwest - PSF applications rolling in for work on Timberwest Lands for which we are supportive of.

Somenos - Looking to do coho counting in the marsh.

River Quest Charters - Steelhead hatchery, would like to try and open up another hatchery. Have the land, has been donated in Lake Cowichan, want an ok or not is this a good idea?

- This forum is a discussion. Members of this table are aware of the process for hatcheries. First step is to talk to the Ministry of Forests, Fish, and Wildlife. Other members of this table can discuss this process further offline.

Wilmot/ Island GIS – Currently mapping the south end water quality to be a visual representation of the data.

Continuing work with MoT to get some culvert/underpass on Wake Lake for the western toads. Looking at funding to tag some of the adults to determine what are the areas around the lake are they going? The land up near the lake that has been put up for development.

Lake Cowichan Hatchery - working on the in-classroom salmon hatchery programs. This year's project will increase fry-salvage effort. Looking at getting DNA from the summer run chinook and getting that DNA into Victoria. Want to include lots of youth in volunteer projects this summer. Leanne Hodges with Nature Response Team, they do music concerts and art (work with Christy Wilkinson) and put together classroom and public activities, hoping to do some joint events this year.

Ted Brookman - Had a meeting with Blair ___ who is in charge of the RFCPP \$15 mil and brought him up to speed on the Cowichan. The grey seals diet (poop) only showed so many otolith bones. The young seals eat the whole fish, the adult seals (due to cameras attached to the seal) show they only eat the bellies out of the female fish. Deputy Minister didn't know what was happening on the West, but he was open to hearing about it. The engagement of DFO and Wildlife told them you can't keep cutting, there is no staff. If we want an environmental assessment, the guy is either in Kamloops or Winnipeg, no support here. Send Ted a letter if you want BC Wildlife Federation letter of support for projects.

Don - Assisted with the signs at drift boat launch sites to warn folk about anchoring in salmon redds.

Craig Wightman - Got PSF funding for access development to Broadway Run (BC Parks). Launch year 1 to put juvenile pitt tags into the Cowichan River to see use of the lower river and estuary. Hoping to do some volunteer restoration on lakefront properties, currently working with CVRD, Dave Pollster, KWL, and working on getting through the DFO referral. The referral process is appropriate and necessary; the question is the level of oversight from DFO because it will be less than the past. The days of a DFO person checking in on the project are gone.

Marshall - Weekly Swan and Goose Count: numbers of swans are lower this year and the immatures are down (10%). The entire population is down, thinking that the nesting period in Alaska wasn't very good this year. Counting raptors, last week there was a Golden Eagle around Westholm, was still there this week. On the south side of the bay we are averaging around 10 cormorants and the usual number of mergansers is around 10-20, so the predatory shorebirds numbers aren't too high.

Traci - Working on the status of the Cowichan Lake fishery, will have a report ready soon. Looking at some management actions to be taken to improve the success for recreational anglers. Valley Fish and Game Club need to vet all regulations, so towards the fall can present the report to the table.

Gerald Thom - 3 year program called the Cowichan Shoreline Project, applied for \$170,000 for the first year of the project. Looking for a graduate level science student for this summer's work.

Kate Miller/ CVRD - Have another active watershed, Shawnigan, which is doing a lot of work around water management and we are partnering with them and other organizations to develop an estimate of natural capital. Using a small case study extrapolate this to the whole region.

Cowichan Tribes - Working on our piece of the causeway breach. Reserve lands are a tricky bit. Licenses are provincial, federal jurisdiction. Sounds like CT will be the agent for the water license to do the intake. The greater flow would help chinook in particular. Met with Lorie Holl about the Eagle Heights initiative, supporting the Naturalists to find a reasonable solution. Hoping to finish the testing for shellfish contamination study this spring. Assisting and organizing to support the appeal process for the water license up at the lake. Working on getting funds together for herring genetic work. Trying to keep on track with the water act and changes. Really great conference by POLIS on Watershed Governance, very successful event that was well attended, tempered a bit by suggestions of implementation of the water act.

Rickard - Almost the equivalent of a 100 year drought for this winter, had this week of rain not happened, the outlook for this year would have been bad.

Business

Cowichan Lake Level – Brian Houle

California is experiencing a 1 in 500 year drought. Starting this year we were half of the license amount, not zero storage in the lake, just half of what we could store. We want to see 18 cms in the river, with all the gates open but dropping lake level, we can't keep that number on throughout the summer. With this bit of rain we are over supply,

and the flow is over 50 cms. 2014 is expected to be a very dry year. Current snow pack is very low, meaning this could be an ugly year. Planning to go on control March 1, which is a month early.

- Need in writing approval from the water license branch to go on early control.
- Possibility for strategic shut downs coordinated with the province?

Administration – Paul Rickard

Eagle Heights: This roundtable and the connections have been successful to bring forward this issue to the government's attention. Assistant Deputy to the Minister will be meeting on March 14th. BC Wildlife Fed has been pushing that this is an important issue, and with a lot of work by the many parties and connections through the network we can raise the issue.

Minister of FLNRO Andrew Thompson, on the list was the Cow Estuary management board, wanted the minister to recognize the committee and helping it move forward into modern times. He was well briefed; two pager on its importance, all they are waiting for is an application to the water management board. The rule curve message was received; we laid a bit of work towards changing the water control methods.

The Recreational Fishery partnerships has seen a lot of support from BC Wildlife, the support did reach the Conservatives notice. If you received a grant and noticed an increase in the money provided, perhaps send a letter commenting on the validity.

We now have a well-functioning website; presentations will be uploaded with each minute's section. This website can be a good communication tool for members and a resource for other watersheds to start their own roundtable.

Action: Need a summary for the history section, and someone to provide the information for achievements section, email these to Meg and she can put the info on the website.

Future Topics: Many people do not understand where their water comes from. Would the Table be interested in learning about the aquifer? We can invite David Slate to present on the water in the Cowichan. Austin Tomas will be back to present on the seals. Can also invite Shaun Wong with MoT to present on topics particular to the Cowichan Valley?

- Explore some options for enforcement; strategize to assist the ministry, DFO, and CVRD for local ideas on how to step up enforcement within the area.
 - A subcommittee can make up a set of questions to present around enforcement to set speakers and a date.
- Tom Rutherford to give a presentation on the Watershed Board Targets
- Presentation on the analysis about agricultural water use
- Completion on the long-term sediment management strategy, perhaps in the fall
- BCUM data gathering on derelict vessels, Bowen Island is trying to do something about the derelict boats. Link into the by-laws for Cowichan Bay?

Areas to rebuild coho and chinook stock – Dr. Dick Beamish

People have been studying Pacific salmon for 50-100 years. If we integrate the research, focused on the fundamental problems and the mechanisms that regulate populations, we would have the basic understanding to move forward.

We have a project for the Puget Sound area called the Salish Sea Project. The project takes an integrated approach to specifically look at chinook and coho to map the decline in marine survival since 1990. There is an indisputable decline seen in Puget Sound/ Strait of Georgia. Once we understand the basis for decline, then what can know where and how to optimize recreational fishing opportunities and optimize management opportunities. This project received funding from the Salmon Commission and Long Live the Kings to deliver around 10 million dollars over the next 5 years. Within the Strait there are 3 areas that will be looked at intensely. The Cowichan Area will be of focus this year for an integrated study that is looking at the early marine survival of chinook and coho in the Cowichan Area. The next 2 years will be two more areas, and these will be studied intensively for 5 years.

The Fundamental limiting factor is the early marine survival, the brood year strength is determined here. The rule is Salmon that grow faster quicker survive better; however, plants and animals that produce lots of babies have a high juvenile mortality. 2 billion fry entered the Strait of Georgia, within a few weeks there would be huge mortality from this number. We don't really understand what causes this mortality. There are speculations but no data. We are going to begin to make those measurements over what causes that mortality.

Historically biologists would do a particular study, but would not integrate the data at the same time so you don't get a complete picture of what is happening across regions. Standard salinity, temperature profiles, plankton will be collected routinely in the Cowichan Estuary this spring. Biological beach seines and purse seining to access stock composition within the immediate area of the estuary, and Ricker trawls offshore in late June and July. We will also be looking at what is happening in the night time (gill nets, purse seining, and a small trawl) it is extremely difficult to do this at night time. As a government employee, it is very hard to have off-hours work. This is not government funding and while a lot of the people involved are government employees, a number of other people are on the project without restrictions on when and how they can work.

- There is the equivalent effort in Washington looking at the same issues and methodologies. Looking at the same species and the same time of the year. There are different things that effect survival rate across the entire region, but marine survival is so poor of barely 4 - 6 weeks.
- Fry react totally differently in the day and the night (divers noticed behaviour). Will there be divers? There will be night swims in the estuary.
 - The fish are very visible and actively on the move in fully lighted conditions (so most of the movement is in the day). We will be looking to see if there different behaviour in the foreshore during the day vs the night, is there a difference between the estuary and marine environment?
 - In 2008 there were 2 billion salmonids entering the Salish Sea. The estimate for herring entering the system? Total estimate is the adults coming back, the number of juveniles that survive through to September, the total number of fish 10 - 12 billion fish in the Strait of Georgia (sculpins to everything). Dominate species are Herring, Northern Smooth tongue (down 70 m in the water, tiny smelt fish more abundant than herring), hake, pollock, slender sole, etc. Herring probably around 2 billion.
 - 224 species of fish in the Strait of Georgia
 - Northern smooth tongues spawn midwater, the babies feed on the larval form of plankton that the juvenile salmon eat the adult version of.
 - Bioluminescence in the estuary lead to still adults at night or else the visual predator seal will see them.
 - In one year we will have an excellent look at the seal predation on juvenile salmon.
- Are there any good stable populations of chinook in the pacific?
 - The entire Pacific catches of salmon are in decline. There are record highs of salmon harvests, but its only particular species. Chinook is not doing well, especially in the south. The South Thompson (14 populations) are doing really well. Their behaviour in the Straight is very different than all other chinook. They enter 6 - 8 weeks later than all the others, by Sept they are doing much better than the ones that enter mid-May and leave by July/August. Harrisons are doing ok too.
 - Cowichan Lampray been around 360 million years, they are tremendous survivors. The key to understanding lampray is to study the Cowichan. Leave it alone. It is a lake spawner in the gravel in front of streams.
 - Hypothetically could install fake kelp in the estuary if the real thing will not take so we at least get a temporary habitat out there.

Cowichan Estuary Management Committee Summary - Ray Demarchi

Habitat Biologist Ron Dedric chaired the meeting, Cowichan Tribes, CVRD, Goetz presented on CERCA, brought forward a number of issues that are of concern to those at this table. No decisions made, things were brought under advisement. Trying to follow along the letter of the law and the lease. The campground installation was discussed. Considering the frustration of the management committee, it was a surprise that a successful meeting occurred. The expansion of the warfage system was brought up.

Cowichan Watershed Board Updates – Rodger Hunter

The Watershed Management and Governance workshop was very successful and well attended; Phenomenal setting, amount of work, and quality of presentations. The workshop was chosen to be here because we are seen as leading the way and were featured. Excellent presentations about using social media, funding and social capital, the tough part is getting funding for operations. The ministry's position on water sustainability act was disappointing, especially the resources section. The legislation is still very bare and there is work we can do still there. How do we incorporate traditional knowledge into watershed governance? This needs to be much more explored. There was a watershed governance tour of 30 people that started off the workshop and talk about the difference governance roles.

This roundtable can teach communities a lot. If this can be replicated in other communities, it is the great pre-cursor to local watershed governance. Kate & Tom went to Coquitlam several years ago and presented a primer on starting a similar roundtable, there is more work to be done around bringing diverse group together cooperatively.

- February meeting get more time for more work. A manifesto came out of the workshop; the whole thing was a big success. There will be a summary of the event to be coming out that can be posted to the website.

The 4th Tuesday of the month will be the speaker series to try and avoid overlaps with other groups.

<http://www.pacificclimate.org/> Plan II Adapt Tool – an online tool for BC to pinpoint local climate change effects.

Snow Pillow – Kate Miller

CVRD will be having this same climate discussion over the next year, especially concerns the low snow pillow and our future stream health. The TAQ meeting will be launching the Cowichan Valley Water Balance Tool as a case study for the rest of the province for home owners to do their small part.

www.cvrld.waterbalance-express.ca Will allow you to select and build your property. The engineering group did most of the work; the homeowner isn't super interested in the math, hydrology, and infiltration. The model looked at the soils, hydrology, precipitation rate, and land uses and came up with 3 targets with different numeric depending where you are in the valley. This will help homeowners to maintain stream health and watershed health so we don't have high erosive flow carrying sediment etc away.

Next Meeting

March 20th.