



April 17, 2014

MINUTES

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

In attendance

Genevieve Singleton (Nature interpreter), Keith Lawrence, Kate Millar, Lori Iannindinardo & Ian Morrison (CVRD), Rick Bryan (Whitewater Canoesit), Ken Epps (Island Timberlands), Chris Cole (Timerbest), Parker Jefferson(One Cowichan), Lisa Hartman, Rob James (Western Stevedoring), Shaun Chadburn (North Cowichan), Elizabeth Bailey (Somenos), Ben Nelson & Austen Thomas (UBC), Jean Crowder (MP), Ted Brookman & Paul Rickard (BCWF), Ray Demarchi (CERCA), Don Closson, Brian Bautinheimer, Brett Hudson & Don Cadden (BC Parks), Kerry Davis (Green Party), Eric Marshall (CVNS), Driony Argue & Gerald Thom (CLRSS), Tom Rutherford (DFO), Kei Rietzel & Meg Loop (CLT), Tim Kulchyski & Helen Reid (Cowichan Tribes),

Regrets: Rodger Hunter, Traci Michalski

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the March meeting were circulated and approved.

Roundtable updates

Kate Miller - FLNRO is continuing to do groundwater analysis, and looking for 50 volunteer homeowners up by Cowichan Lake to have their well water tested.

Kai Rietzel - Working on riparian restoration on Bings Creek near Skinner Road bridge (wattle fence), grade 2's helped plant, several volunteer work parties over the past few weeks. Quamichan Stewards completed riparian restoration near Woodmere (blackberry and replant riparian areas). A tributary of Avril Creek on 8 ½ Acre Farm's land was planting by a volunteer work party. Completed a Cowichan Estuary bird viewing map, \$1 suggested donation. April 26th Quamichan Lake fishing derby 9am - 2pm. May 10th Pollinator Conservation Workshop to be held at Cowichan Agriculture Hall. May 24 -25, Streamkeepers workshop with Dave Clough. May 17 Low Tide Day in Cowichan Bay at Kilpalus Beach with beach cleanup and critter count.

Genevieve Singleton - Asked to do salmon release at Kerry Park. 7 bluebirds have returned, Ornithologist Gary Slater has brought up a total of 8 birds for release. 3 or 4 more batches with babies. May 29th Cow Bay Pub, 5 -8 pm, silent auction and B&B fundraiser to raise \$5000 for the Bluebirds. Eagle Heights, the CVRD, BCW, CCLT, Tribes, CVNS, can officially begin the protection of Eagle Heights with Island Timberlands. Honeymoon Bay ecological

reserve, flowers will be at their peak this weekend. Nancy Turner presenting at VIE Tuesday April 22, 7 pm.

Keith Lawrence - Sandy Pool year 1 activities are complete, primarily riparian stabilization materials (plants, boulders, fences, etc), year 2 activities are underway. Live staking is complete, hundreds of cottonwood stems up and down stream. Potted plants will be going in the fenced area. Regional Earth Day Planning Committee, there will be a panel discussion on reviving biodiversity.

Richard Bryan - Kayakers are interested in working with other groups to foster education and spreading the word.

Ken Epps - Brought Dave Polster in to discuss options for deactivating roads. Introducing signage around the Eagle Heights area, instigate some broom removal along roadways.

Gerald Thom - Resilience is showing April 29th, 7 pm at the school. Had a showing specifically to the school and it was well attended. April 22. 1 - 3 pm Lakeside clean up.

Briony Argue, thesis to figure out what makes environmental stewardship leaders.

Claude Theirault - May 3rd salmon fishing derby, DNA samples will be taken to determine origin. Now operating a smolt counting fence along a creek from the airport, 60 smolts counted so far.

Ben Nelson - Will be studying the relationship between salmon and seals in Cowichan Bay.

Parker - New boat take out near boat creek is getting lots of support. One Cowichan has a speaker's event tonight, "Getting off fossil fuels", Island Savings Centre, 7 pm. South side of river, pile of mattresses.

Elizabeth Bailey - Somenos will have a table at the Earth Day Event, fundraiser for the new viewing tower, May 8th Old Firehouse Wine Bay, whiskey is the theme, 6:30 pm, \$50 tickets. Purple martin nest boxes donated by MoT, looking for install sites along the Somenos system.

Jean Crowder - Working on a bill that would require the Coast Guard to be the designated holder of all wrecks. Washington model for dealing with derelict boats is excellent, this bill will not go that far but it is at least making an authority.

Lori - Presenting in South Korea on Cittaslow and salmon, presenting to 10 other countries.

Ted Brookman - Habitat Conservation Trust fund is the NGO who disperses money from all hunting license/tags, fishing license. BC Conservation Foundation is looking at relationships, possibly partnerships for Shaw Creek. May 20th speaking in Parksville on the CSRT process who also in early June want to see the film Resilience. Integrated Fisheries Management Plan, a lot of push by commercial fleet to change boundaries on how they can fish sockeye. They would be able to use full length gill nets, they would catch other species (coho & steelhead).

Ray Demarchi - Broom removal project on the causeway, about mid May; will need permissions and approvals. Thinking about removing abandoned railroad tracks and barb wire fence, between 1st & 2nd gates; hope to get several groups involved improving the trail, as an alternative to walking on the roadway including creating viewscapes. National Wildlife Refuges in the US are little known birding gems. The refuge system is an impressive model where lots of habitat restoration is happening.

Don Closson - Skutz boat take-out, working quickly to bring it about. Looking at trying to mitigate illegal use of the site (tree cutting, camping, etc). Contractor proposals for campground management will be open soon, sometime in June. Koksilah River burnt bridge, lots of vandalism, looking to change over that locking system.

Eric Marshall - Monthly shorebird count in Cowichan Bay, ospreys have returned. One purple martin has been seen in the bay. Purple Martin boxes going into Quamichan, see how that goes because so far the martins only nest in the estuary.

BC Parks - Looking at reengaging on the Cowichan River Management Plan. This plan started 6 years ago, went off the rails several years ago, got it back on track and will be working with Tribes over the next year. We will start looking at public consultation aspects, working with regional staff to getting input into that management plan to start implementing.

Briony Argue - Pursuing thesis with RRU Environmental Sustainability, project is on environmental leadership in stewardship. Record personal experiences with volunteer environmental leaders to get a better understanding of what drives that pursuit. Explores connections between level of adult maturity and activities pursuing. Commitment is about 2 hours for volunteers.

Tim Kulchyski - Rotary screw trap started, fry fence has started. Fry are moving but water is still cool so big migration hasn't begun. Working on projects like Eagle Heights.

Paul Rickard - AGM of BCWF. Chair of conservative hunting and fishing committee came to convention in Kamloops, particularly wanted to meet the fisheries committee. The economic impact of recreational fisheries and prawn fisheries were particular issues. He does want to come out and meet with fisheries. He was quoting the \$8.2 billion number for recreational fisheries contribution. They have also heard about the roundtable. Paul was asked to present on CSRT and CWB, significant grant from the Bob & Betty White Foundation reporting on our actions. Brian Simmons was co-presenter, created the semi-modified rule curve, he has a good powerpoint on the new water moderation act, changes to the definitions. Ie, change to the definition of streams and the increase in scope to wetlands etc. Powerpoint available, please feel free to take out any slides you wish for other presentations about the Cowichan system. A new group, Natural Resources Officers (FLNRO enforcers) 150 in BC, seem to have a long list of what they are able to enforce (atv use, speeders on logging road, building bridges). Riparian habitat enforcement is what he can get involved in. Conservation Officers no longer can work on riparian enforcement, the NROfficers are at the Access Centre. Tour of Shaw Creek, HCTF if they are going to fund it need to still enable fishing activities to happen. Shaw is an important elk calving area, but fishing will be important. Large cutthroat trout in the stream at the time. PSF 164 project proposals only had money to fund 1/3 of the projects. Fair bit of discussion and evaluation.

Business

Seal Predation Studies in Cowichan Bay – Austen Thomas & Ben Nelson

Larger research study funded by the PSF, whose goal is to find out what is happening to the productivity of chinook and coho in the Strait of Georgia. Green = hard parts of skeleton found. Blue = the actual DNA so a better look at the actual amount consumed. Ie) May shows a lot of salmon consumed, likely tiny pink smolt who would leave no skeleton after digestion. Pender was traditionally the big place to catch sockeye for the last 40-50 years, part of the migration to the Fraser.

Average foraging distance is 20-30km per seal from haul out site. So they can be living in Cowichan Bay but feeding many kilometers away.

- They would be eating juveniles locally, traveling distances to get adults.
- By July our fish has moved out of the bay by June. May fish are probably ours, July could be other locations or they are feeding in other locations.
- Pink hatch and move out in February. What we do have in May is a huge migration in July.

The interpretation of the data is not clear and multi layered. Most notable the fall spike of feeding is chum, 2.5 million pounds of chum come back, which is larger than the other species coming back. This DNA research could be done on bird scat (just need 20ml) to see the other predators of salmonids in the estuary.

2015 going to be able to do the RFID tags (top of seal head counting pit tagged smolt). Ben is taking over the data collection, likely will be out weekly to catch the salmon migrations that happen quickly and have a short time duration. Need to be out there on a high frequency.

- Threshold of 50% of salmon juvenile stock get pit tagged \$2 a tag, to have a moderate of success for the seal testing.

Parks 10 Year Monitoring Report –BC Parks

Cowichan River is designated as a Canadian Heritage River, obligation to complete a 10 year monitoring report to ensure the river maintains the values for which it was designated. Report created by a lot of the members of this table, CVRD and DFO's contribution was invaluable. Report was done by Madrone Environmental and submitted to the Canadian Rivers Board. It was a very comprehensive report, very impressed with the quality and a thank you to all the contributions for the time and effort dedicated by the local community. What is next for the Cowichan? Now back to the annual monitoring, if you have important happenings on the river, please let Don or Bret know to report on it. Trying to develop a cross-country network of groups such as the CSRT that are involved in environmental stewardship and management on Heritage Rivers. If this of benefit to this group, what kinds of things or issues would you be interested in communicating about with this broad heritage River group? Open to feedback on the concept.

Provincial Board Member for Heritage Rivers Program – BC Parks

2009 hosted the board for a tour of the Cowichan. The way the report was laid out and ability to demonstrate what goes on in the river and how integrated/partners in the overall management helps to push a message to the board to see the Heritage Rivers program moving away from the historic highlighting of cultural/historic recreational value into one that is a more resource stewardship community model. Bring into emphasis these important rivers, but also the management now and into the future. In BC, we are hoping to bring the Adams River into the Heritage River program, looking to be a record return year.

Bill-4 Park Amendment Act: Passed a few weeks ago. Bill 4 does three things:

- 1) Eliminated a piece of the Park Act that refers to destruction/disturbance that was less than 2023 hectre 5000 acres (1964 was drafted in, at the time parks were managed through Forests), about 99% of smaller parks were free of any other land delineation. This park has about 5 or 6 permits for use of the Cowichan Park, only issue permits for the recreational use of the park.

- 2) Ability to issue permits for commercial filming, the film industry has come into parks and wants to shoot in the park, and we have been allowing this for nearly 20 years. Do we absolutely have the authority to issue that permit? Only issue a permit if it is necessary for the recreational use of the park. Now able to do this.
- 3) Research Permits. Will only be allowed when it fits Parks values. No open pit mining etc will not be allowed within the park mandate.

Provincial Park Boundary Policy, been in place since 2000, this policy sets out a process by which gov can consider boundary adjustments where they are needed. The park system is over 100 years old and now needed to correct the incorrect boundary issues such as realigning for highway site lines that can poke into parks for further right of ways. Proponent driven boundary adjusts are request to the government to consider changing the boundary, no limit to what reason can be given. Government can say yes or no to the concept plans. Examples: No to bring electricity from Alaska through the park, no to a private wharf off of Quadra. Out of 12 proponent driven boundary adjustments proposed recently, 4 were dismissed. Elk Falls boundary adjustments for BC Hydro to allow space for seismic upgrades. Required to demonstrate to the government how the adjustment is feasible. We now have the legal ability to enable permits to go in and look at how the adjustment would look like on the land, but there is still a long process to actually adjusting boundaries.

- no appeal process. Parks is trying to have more transparency so that the public gets more input prior to decision making.

Government asked that legal certainty to be in these permit application. The way case law is dealt with, the legal certainty has multiple provisions. Bill 4 is not not the only way to assess if the activity is appropriate. Several tools (management plans, risk assessments, habitat assessments etc) available. Have language around pipelines, transmission lines, etc. There are 35 parks in the lines of some of the companies for energy corridors, have 7 parks that are looked at for potential boundary adjustments for oil and gas access. The Kinder-Morgen pipeline want to twin that line, and a park was placed on top of an existing pipeline. Trans Canada Highway L&G development has a corridor through a park. Burney River Protection Area, already known that Northern Enbridge and at least one other pipeline, order and council to look at.

Concerns that Bill 4 could lead to an improper boundary adjustment; there is a much bigger spotlight on the boundary adjustment process. Out of the 8 boundary adjustments, 800 hectares came out of park. It is a long hard process to change a park boundary, tremendous amount of workload in stage 1 & 2 process, consultation with first nation and stakeholders, assessments, then into decision making process. For oil companies, the public is not going to accept these adjustments, and for timelines/cost reasons the adjustments won't be feasible. Parks can end up holding up the planning piece. If a mine (for instance) is trying to develop in parkland, that is a government decision to change park boundary and takes years.

- The Minister promised more reporting on permits and more transparency in the process. There are 118 research permits. Currently they are saying you can't bring a pipeline through a park, but you can take that land out of park, but it's a very difficult process to do

that. The history has shown that appropriate changes are allowed, and non-appropriate uses denied.

Bill 11 - Another 55,000 hectares added, marine foreshore areas on the Northern part of Van Isle. Every year get to see an addition. Parks is pushing 14.3% of the land base of BC, one of the biggest systems out there.

The Parks Council looks at common issues around park management across Canada to brainstorm ways to come to solution. Starting to look at the relevance of parks to an urban public, which does not get out and recreate in park spaces like they once did. Recreation and Conservation values, but what other ways do we fit into the Canadian Public - ie part of the health care system, part of the education system to build those bonds across Canada. Ministers approved a new approach National Strategy "Connecting Canadians with Nature" for a place based approach to show those less than standard relationships. The grassroots staff level is doing really well.

Strategic Plan Review, a 3 year plan over what we want to focus on. Gone through exercises with staff with 5 big themes: Park Values/ Conservation & promoting Recreation; Not a well-funded organization so we have to build resources; Lots of folk retiring and trying to develop new staff coming in; Partnerships, government has not been able to do this alone anymore. Cowichan River is a microcosm to demonstrate possibilities and lessons learned from groups like this can help create examples for the other parks.

- Don has been a significant coordinator and enabler during the process.
- Is there a process to add a place like Shaw Creek or Eagle Heights to be added to Parks?
 - Parks no longer has acquisition funds. Always of interest to purchase potential parklands, but have no money to do so. Have had exceptional deals (land exchanges, use of carbon credits), funding partners, trying to build other projects. Essentially BC Parks keep lists of potential projects; Parks would look at it in terms of Provincial Park values. If Shaw doesn't make the grade for requirements, we can help facilitate the process.
- What is Parks doing to address the Youth Class (worst proportions of aging populations in the world) and immigrant populations who many not have park use cultural value?
 - Population is rising but park users are stagnant at 20million, and users are not diverse across the make-up of Canadian populations.
 - The Learn to Camp program, whole generation of adults and youth who have no idea how to camp. In Ontario have a whole program around taking downtown youth in Toronto and teaching them all the skills and requirements of camping to build the inherent comfort level of urban people.
 - Interest in the school system to get the kids into parks, but they have no funding for busses. Park Enhancement Fund looking at grants to schools just to fund transportation, to let others take over the interpretation side.

Next Meeting
May 15th, 2014.