



February 18, 2016

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Genevieve Singleton at 9 am.

In attendance

Meg Loop (CLT), Keith Lawrence, Ian Morrison, Kerry Davis, Lori Iannidinardo (CVRD), Parker Jefferson (One Cowichan), Eric Marshall (CVNS), Shaun Chadburn (North Cowichan), Genevieve Singleton (Nature Interpreter), Jean Atkinson, Christine Brophy and Diana Gunderson (CLRSS), Barry Hetschko (SMWS), Ken Clements & Claude Theirault (Sidney Anglers), Tracy Flemming (Cowichan Tribes), Jennifer Hermary (MP's office), Geoff Strong (CERCA), Dennis Popplestone and Rob Cage (PPWC #2), Lorne Duncan, Brian Houle (Catalyst), Dave Preikshot (DFO), Martin Paish (SFAB), Swarn Leung (CSAA), Rob James (Western Stevedoring), Chris Morley (Friends of Cowichan), Dave Lindsey (Timberwest), Derek Haupt and Brian Nielsen (WFP), Alicia Fall and Rosie Simms (POLIS)

Regrets: Shawn Kerr, Ken Epps and Morgan Kennah, Don Closson, Bob Crandall, Tim Kulchyski, Ted Brookman, Cheri Ayers

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the January meeting were circulated and approved.

Roundtable updates

Meg Loop – Beer and Burger fundraiser this Sunday, Feb 21st at the Cow Bay Pub. Every Friday have work parties on Averill and Bings creek, lots of volunteers coming out to plant and live stake along creeks.

CERCA - Nature trail continuing.

Martin Paish - Sits on Harvest Roundtable. Facilitated process, DFO, Sport Fishing Advisory Board, Cowichan Tribes, Commercial Fisheries, Conservation and Protection (fisheries officers, Stock Assessment, management). Meet 2-3 times in person over a year, and weekly phone conversations in the fall to navigate the sometimes challenging issues of fishery harvest. Principles of sustainability, reasonable sharing of the resource between all groups. Meetings are public. The Harvest Roundtable is a very similar process to this group, and can be very linked to the work at CSRT. From a harvest perspective, chinook appear to be stable 4500 - 6000 spawners, goals is 6500 natural spawners. There is no formal stock assessment for coho, use an indicator creek called

Black Creek up island to inform Cowichan. This is the first time there has been no recreational fishery for coho, this is the lowest abundance anyone has ever seen. This has been seen across south island. Chum appears to be stable, issues around fair share amongst harvest groups. Steelhead and chinook, and resident trout are all a part of our focus. What triggers a section 8 (emergency action).

- Brian Houle, the 4.5 cms of last year (gates fully open) and weather trend indicated would not have enough storage, so triggered requirement for section 8. We can get by on 4.5 cms, but reminder that 7 cms is the actual fishery value. Part of the process of how to go about dealing with the realities of climate change and the actual legal and physiological abilities for Catalyst to control lake level. By about May - June we will know where we are at for the summer. The license that Catalyst has 7 cms at the weir and 2.8 cms below pumphouse, we withdraw 1.6 which is less than what we are allowed. Dropping below 4.5 is putting the mill's ability to stay open at risk. The reason we go below 7 is because we literally do not have the water to stay at 7, so get permission from Water Managers from Province to drop below.

- No recent monetary allocation to the value of fishery of the Cowichan System (30 years ago it was 1 million dollars). No recent study, there is a province study. Recreational fishery value exceeded commercial/aquaculture/fish processing by a huge factor. Still limited by water availability.

Jean Atkinson - PSF application completed, reporting on RFCPP

Jennifer Hermary - Still awaiting meetings with Minister on SIA in Shawnigan, tabling petitions. Federal budget expected soon, welcoming any feedback until February 25th.

Claude - Preparing for annual fishing derby on May 7th, seeking sponsors.

Swarn Leung - Developing watershed tours for the Koksilah.

Ian Morrison - Noxious weed bylaw has been approved.

Brian Houle - 3.5 water above crest of weir, 136 cms, 22cms into tributaries. Snow pack, while may be a bit inaccurate, Jump Creek is showing half of normal snowpack, and Heather Mountain showing twice the snowpack than Jump Creek - no history to inform this information. Continuing the pursuit of Section 8. Catalyst is still moving forward with a section 10 with intention to pursue additional 10 inches of storage on existing weir in light of seismic safety. Within a month or two for seismic safety.

Dennis Popplestone - Starting water reduction team up again. Genevieve will be leading a nature walk through the Mill to identify invasive species.

Barry Hetchko - drone flew the Somenos Creek to look for parrotfeather, available on youtube.

Eric Marshall - Herons are returning to the rookery, birds are pairing off. Swans peaked at over 700 birds, now about 500. About 2000 geese in December and about 500 this week.

Dave Preicshot - Ongoing work with the early marine survival project, able to report on monitoring for Somenos Basin.

Kerry Davis - Judicial review for Shawnigan ongoing this week and likely next. Lot 21 failed to pay taxes, now owned by the Province - liability transferred to the Province (have they paid now?)

Diana Gunderson - thank you to Sidney Anglers for donation to shoreline project, and thank you for the letters of support.

Shaun Chadburn - funded the drone survey, ground truthing to take place.

Keith Lawrence - Working with communications manager to notify folks who live near Giant Hogweed and ways to identify/dispose of it. Snowpillow is being worked on by Province, there is actually snow (1-2m). Watershed Atlas work is ongoing, great progress of land uses, ecosystems, infrastructure and community elements being collected. Working on funding application to Healthy Community Funds for coaching/facilitation/training services and actual money around Airshed Program.

Genevieve Singleton - Good news on Eagle Heights, first major hurdle overcome with Al Martin of BCWF, Island Timberlands, Cowichan Tribes, CVNS, CLT, and Paul Rickard. Papers have been signed, now working on getting a price set and funds raised. Bluebird project will be starting up again, last year had 75 bluebirds and had a number overwintering. Will be translocating females as we have many young bachelors. Writing articles for the Valley Voice, would love to hear about local nature events. Working with Somenos for Holly Arntzen and Kevin Wright, able to get every child from Alex Aitken into the Marsh as well as partnership for music. No update on Evans Readymix Site, trucks are taking contaminated soil to that site regularly. Will be working with One Cowichan - Demonstrate community support for the Cowichan Watershed Board's proposal to take on water governance locally. One Cowichan wishes to get a couple thousand signatures on a letter of support to the project, will be bringing a sign sheet. Want to be ready May 1st. Carrie Burdette concert. There are some significant navigational hazards in the river, there is a large fur down on an island near Greendale, must take backchannel around it - this could be a fatal interaction. Above Skutz Falls, and by the bible camp, serious log jams (gotta go to the right, maybe a 6 foot gap). Start fry monitoring again last month, worked with Bob Crandall last year. Worked hard from June to end of August trapping 7-8 major tributaries. 10% of what was expected coho returned. How many coho fry are going to be emerging this year given the dramatic decrease? The weir funding was not approved, will need to come up with a Plan B. Alistair MacGregor is trying to demonstrate we need to access other infrastructure funding. As a community and local government need to be "shovel ready". Lori Iannidinardo- Tom Rutherford has been hosting the DFO group in Cowichan Bay. Big tour around Cowichan Bay and other community restoration locations. CSRT was highlighted as a valuable link. Feb 25th, 7 pm at Bench a Community Conversation. Don Closson - Capital Project rebuilding park at Cowichan Lake - redoing campsites and replaced all pit toilets so less potential for leakage into water sources. Some vandalism at the Cowichan River footpath, put barriers up at an erosion site/hazard. Some ATVs have pulled apart some structures, can repair, but installing additional access restriction will be going in.

- Heritage River annual report due again. Request any groups who have done works in the River or at the Lake a brief detail over activities this past year. Need it by March 15th.

Business

Log Booms:

Tracy Flemming:

Ongoing challenge for Cowichan Tribes. Cowichan people have not been able to access food resources from the Bay due to impacts to the bay and pollution. Cowichan Tribes is a distinct and separate government agency, it is not a stakeholder. FLNRO will be present at the next meeting. Under recommendations of the Management Plan of 1987, the Cowichan Estuary Environment Committee addressed renewing log booming leases. Cowichan Tribes has opportunity to provide input to that community, but also engaged in consultation process with Crown organization outside of this committee. Log booms in the estuary are positioned in such a place that twice a day, every day, the booms ground out. This grounding action makes it impossible for certain species to flourish, particularly eelgrass. WFP provided some reports over last several years, including a cost benefit analysis for relocation to Deep Water. Cowichan Tribes decided did not have enough information to take a position, do not have the capacity to take this on, request funding to hire consultants of CT's choosing to take on review of the studies. Final results are due Feb 24th, day before the next meeting.

Based on preliminary review by consultant, Cowichan Tribes is in agreement that there are fundamental issues of the study and limited data for interpretations made. Chief Seymour has been in communications with Minister of FLNRO, Cowichan Tribes will oppose log booms in the estuary if pushed.

Derek Haupt, Western Forest Product:

1986 Order and Council called for reduction in booming grounds. 19% of intertidal slated to booming, down from 46%. WFP is the sole remaining license holder in the Bay; our total area is 41 acres of booming or 5.8% of the estuary. Doleman donated 23 acres to Ducks Unlimited as part of the tradeoff at this time. Twice a day, every day, logs are grounded, that is the nature of intertidal storage. We have gone from a 20 year lease, to a 10 year lease, to a 5 year lease. We cannot not ground the logs even though we are legally mandated to not allow this to happen, we cannot move the booms outside the lease area. Now at 4.5 years without a license, the project review process is for new or environmentally significant projects. 2013 literature Review, 2014 Environmental Impact Assessment, a year later asked to do invertebrate study and cost benefit analysis of deep water storage. Requested a Terms of Reference to address the scientific studies, which informed the studies performed and the report sent to the Management Committee. Western is eager to be in compliance and have some certainty of operations for 130 employees and 100 contractors. It would cost WFP about \$870,000 to move storage to deep-water.

Geoff Strong, CERCA:

Grounding log booms was one of the major reasons CERCA was formed. Problem identified was log booms major contributor to eelgrass success. Law states log booms must not ground, understand the challenges of the site. Two options, no storage or deep-water storage. For WFP need storage to function. Propose 6 month moratorium on storage, move log booms to deep water storage to assess impact.

Cowichan Lake Shoreline Stewardship Project - Christine Brophy

In 2010 a series of reports came out to establish a baseline assessment of the shoreline at Cowichan Lake and history of impacts, fish utilization, an amphibian study, a lampry study, and an erosion assessment. In 2013 had a two-day discussion and workshop on what role stakeholders can play to influence change. Through this event, CLRSS developed strategic plan for the Cowichan Shoreline Project.

Landowner Education Results:

To date, somewhere around 200 people have been visited for door-to-door contact, about 80% of the people were aware of ecosystem around lake, 70% understood riparian.

Establish homeowner locations to run pilot projects for restoration.

Accomplishments:

Riparian restoration at 15 locations, establishing a monitoring program, completed technical reports on result, and riparian tours for 6 properties, about 2-3 hours to see locations.

Monitoring:

2014 plant survival rate was about 67% at two year. In 2015, a one-year survival rate 91% at different locations than the 2014 monitoring, due to learning about limiting factors, which was mainly herbivory (plant selection and fencing have helped improved survival). With big storms this winter, still looking like good survival.

Long- Term Project Goals:

Form partnerships to permanently protect 15kms of shoreline/riparian areas, continue monitoring, and focus on key properties.

Questions:

2014 there were 2 very large properties, 1500 sqm for Cowichan Lake First Nations
2015 the average length was 300sqm, so smaller locations meant more sites available.

Have you considered brokerage with Developers? Take the footprint of impacted land and mitigate/plant salvage in those locations.

Comparison of survival rates, to make comparisons may want to consider staggering planting to half of site in a given year, then returning with different species/strategies, to compare how all are acting at the same site. It is difficult to make comparisons at different sites and different species, would be more statistically meaningful.

Water Sustainability Project - Rosie Simms

see presentation slides

3 Key Messages:

BC's fresh water is facing increasing pressure

The new act has promising features, but its effectiveness depends on the right regulations and full implementation.

5 core areas: groundwater, environmental flows, water objectives, planning and governance, monitoring and reporting.

Overall, the act hasn't changed the structure of colonial water laws.

Questions:

Ian –

- Treaty Advisor Lead, this is a very big issue for first nations. FITFIR is a huge issue. Groundwater information is severely lacking, CVRD has been working hard on groundwater mapping and inventory. The Cowichan is a contender for local governance, but there is opposition within the community. We have to be active, loud, and firm that we need this, and there is a real resistance to local taxpayer dollars at the municipal level having to pick up the bill.

Dennis

- The quantity of the water is the focus, not the quality, and this is a major issue. Ie Fracking is taking out huge amounts of water, and destroying.
 - o Water objectives can be set for water quality to other regulators, the water sustainability plans can be developed to address quality.
- How can we regulate what is in the aquifer, ie isotope in Dougan's lake from Olympic Peninsula. Where are they going to get the enforcement, dedicated funds, when the water prices are so low and do not actually affect domestic users?
 - o These are all part of the challenges, huge gaps in groundwater knowledge and so much work around pricing. This is a major change for the Province, and capacity is a challenge.

Next Meeting

March 17th, 2016