

Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable Meeting Notes

January 20, 2022, 9 -12 on Zoom

Please address corrections/additions to

cowichanstewardshiproundtable@gmail.com

www.cowichanstewardship.com

Welcome and acknowledgement that our co-chairs host the meeting from the unceded traditional territory of Cowichan Tribes.

Regrets: Peter Woods: BC Parks, Tim Kulchyski: Cowichan Tribes, Edmond Duggan: Paddlers

Attendees: Genevieve Singleton: Co-chair Cowichan Stewardship Round Table (CSRT), Parker Jefferson: Co-Chair CSRT, Tom Rutherford: Cowichan Watershed Board (CWB) Jill Thompson: (CWB), Rick Bryan: Recreational Paddlers, Lisa Fox, Ian Morrison: Area F Director Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD), Cole Smith: Sonia Furstenu (MLA)'s office, Cowichan Secondary School (CSS) Environmental Stewardship class, Barry Hetschko: Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society (SMWS) and Cowichan Valley Naturalists (CVNS), Dorothy Marshall: Cowichan Valley Naturalists (CVNS), Joe Saysell: Friends of the Cowichan, Anna Scouten: Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre (CENC), Sarah Megyesi, BC Parks Senior Ranger, Martha Lescher: Cowichan Valley Naturalists (CVNS), Edmond Duggan: Paddlers, Elodie Roger: Origins Environmental Services, Cowichan Shoreline Stewardship Project (CSSP), Melissa Nottingham: Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Neil Anderson: Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society (SMWS), Bruce Coates: Cowichan Valley Naturalists (CVNS), Cowichan Community Land Trust (CCLT), Karen Deck: Save Our Holmes Society (SOH), Jim Deck: Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society (CLRSS), Jane Kilthei: Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre (CENC), Pam Jorgenson: Mosaic Forestry Management, Goetz Schuerholz, CERCA, Kelsie Murchy: BC Conservation Foundation (BCCF), Jamieson Atkinson: BCCF, Carol Hartwig, Cherie Ayers, BioAyer Consultants, Stephanie Cottell: Cowichan Community Land Trust (CCLT), Guy Johnston, Michelle Rose Fishing.

CSRT Business:

Thanks to Bruce Coates for taking December notes. Lisa Fox and Bruce Coates offered to take notes in the future as needed. Karen Deck is also happy to help CSRT by taking notes.

- Terms of Reference carried over, with a request from Genevieve for a sub-committee to undertake this task. No one stepped forward. Will carry over.
- Genevieve Singleton and Jill Thompson explained the process being undertaken to celebrate Sta'lo' Skweyul (River Day) on Sunday September 25, 2022. The deadline for the grant application has been extended. This federal grant is being offered as a way to "re-open" after a long COVID absence from public gatherings. Jill described the theme "River Is Our Healer" and described the stations along the river as akin to a garden tour. The grant application allows for honorariums for elders and knowledge keepers who will be

invited to be present at each station. There will also be room in the budget to pay for essential staff/organizers. The deadline is the end of January, Jill will keep CSRT updated as to whether our submission will be accepted.

Round the Table:

Tom Rutherford (CWB): January 13 Minister Conroy signed Ministerial Order M8 – 2021 Xwulqw’selu Koksilah River watershed order. It provides a mandate for the provincial staff to work with Cowichan Tribes to create a Water Sustainability Plan for the Koksilah watershed. The scoping process to lay out the groundwork for this was initiated in March 2020, CWB has been acting as secretariat and advisor to the process since then. This is significant because it is the first WSP underway in BC. The ecological values considered in water management decisions. Collaborative decision- making approach with FN’s. It is enforceable. It is a big step down the road of water sustainability in BC – happening right here in our watershed.

The CWB will discuss its potential role in holding or supporting a Conservation water license for the Cowichan River at our next meeting on Jan. 31 – those meetings are virtual – but open to the public.

Jeff Anderson, the principle of Geomorphic, the river scientist retained to develop Eflows and Critical flows for the Koksilah through the CWB CESI grant is in the process of finalizing his report – it’s very interesting. It’s been run by our tech. advisory committee, Cowichan Tribes technical staff and will be reporting out to our board in Feb. or March – I will keep this table informed so those of you who are interested can attend. Take away is that Jeff has taken a really close look at both the water availability and the habitat – and the connection between the 2 using some very advanced modeling – with some very interesting results.

CWB is following up on its “Why fish need water” video with a second in the series – “Why fish need trees”. Filming will be completed next week – product be available by springtime.

Interested in why fish need water? – video on our website – cowichanwatershedboard.ca

Rick Bryan, Paddlers: Glad to finally get out on the water. He will be speaking to the Nanaimo Watershed Round Table at their next meeting.

Lisa Fox: This is Lisa’s first Roundtable. Welcome Lisa! After years in Alberta working on watershed issues, Lisa has recently moved here and is looking forward to learn about BC watersheds and becoming involved.

Bruce Coates, CVNS, CCLT: spoke about “Ted” Talk, the latest in the speakers series. Ted Leischner spoke about native pollinators, including mason bees. In order to expand the area that pollinators can use, a pollinating neighbourhood near Cairnsmore Street, Duncan is proposed, with a group of neighbours planting bee friendly flower gardens. He recommended Geoff Strong’s letter in the Times Colonist about the 2 billion tree initiative. Next speaker on Feb. 7 will be Emmie Page, Marine Campaigner for Pacific Wild on Herring. Other speakers include Genevieve Singleton speaking on Quw’utsun Sp’e’lug’um, Cowichan Flowers (Feb 15), Alicia Taylor and Terrence Miranda’s “Project Bird Songs” and what hearing loss means for happiness

and habitat conservation (evening March 15) and Dr. Verena Tunnicliffe on Hot vents and Seafloor Seamounts (April 4). Bruce also spoke about the seminar “Blue Ecology” as a concept for integrating First Nations and Western Concepts for “water reconciliation. For more information: kstephens@watersustainabilitybc.ca or paul@nalt.bc.ca

Ian Morrison, CVRD: Ian spoke about the increasing interest in storm water management. He cited the example of torrent flows and land slides in Cowichan Bay. Costs to install and maintain storm water systems are paid by the residents that are directly affected. It is a provincial jurisdiction, so regional districts must go to MOTI for zoning, road access and drinking water issues in new subdivisions. The Flood Management bylaw is meant to address waterfront properties to prevent building too close to the 200-year flood plain. This is designed to prevent loss of value to homeowners in case of flooding. In budget news, directors want to keep taxes down. As a result of this and other concerns, some CVRD directors wish to save money by cutting funds to the Park Acquisition Fund. Ian asks concerned folks to contact the Chair and Directors: legislativeservices@cprd.bc.ca. The provincial government is studying the Private Managed Forest Lands Act and has frozen the land taxes of private owners. As a result, the rest of BC residents have to pick up the slack.

Cole Smith, representing Sonia Furstenau: Re: Storm Water Management, Sonia is working to encourage government to address the effects of extreme weather. Sonia has recently met with residents of Youbou/Meade Creek who have felt the effects of logging. In situations like this Cole said MOTI should take more a greater role in stormwater management, recognizing that its infrastructure is oftentimes the primary or only water drainage infrastructure in a drainage area.” Sonia is also urging for better proactive planning for housing so that people will not have to deal with land erosion issues.

Jim Deck, CLRSS: Our Signature Project for many years was our “Annual River Cleanup”. This event was held towards the end of August just before things started to shut down for the summer. One of the biggest issues over the last few years was tubers. The amount of garbage dumped in the river was considerable. The tube companies were receiving pressure to clean up their mess. In 2020 the Tube shack started to clean up the garbage in the river. This continued in 2021. In 2021 the CLRSS and Tube Shack held a river cleanup day in September. Participation from the local community was not as good as previous years. The CLRSS have decided to allow the Tube Shack to take on the river cleanup on their own and we would seek a new Signature Project that would define who we are. We are stewards of the Cowichan Lake and River and therefore need a Signature Project to take to the community to demonstrate our leadership. In 2022 the CLRSS looks forward to working with the CSRT in a River Celebration Day on September 25, 2022. The CLRSS will prepare an activity that demonstrates our commitment to the lake and River.

Karen Deck, SOH: We are pleased to hear that the CVRD is hiring a Watershed Protection and Drinking Water Coordinator. The community has always had watershed protection as its first priority. We, along with many others are advocating for changes to the PMFL Act that will give local governments like the CVRD the ability to increase watershed protection. The directors have noticed an increase in fish populations in the creeks that run year-round in Youbou. Logging trucks are very busy after the holiday, bringing out lots of very small logs. We are reaching out beyond the community for allies and counsel as forestry activity increases above our community.

Barry Hetschko, CVNS, SMWS: Storm water management is also a concern for Barry, as the proposed development around the new hospital does not as yet have a system that will prevent run off into Somenos Lake and Averill Creek. He thinks ponds and bio-swales would be the solution and has been advocating for this for years.

The swan and goose count: 497 swans, 600 geese. 31 eagles and 6 red tail hawks were also counted. There are other bird counts that happen over the year. Barry offered to help in any way he can for the River Day event in September.

Neil Anderson, SMWS: Recent weather events caused significant flood damage at the open-air classroom as well as the fence. SMWS is actively seeking grants for projects that direct storm water and water quality monitoring. Neil also informed the group that there is a toxic element in tires when in contact with ozone and is very toxic to fish populations. A question from Genevieve was about the tire fire's effects downstream. Neil responded that the fire retardant used is also toxic. Dr. Dave Preikshot is involved in investigating.

Anna Scouten, CENC: This is Anna's first CSRT meeting. Welcome Anna! Anna has a background in restoration and is stepping into Sierra's role. Alicia is mentoring her and they are looking for restoration projects.

Jane Kilthei, CENC: CENC has submitted a grant application to Eco-Action to bring high school youth to the Koksilah and Cowichan Rivers. The plan is to bring these students back to the sites over a series of years to discover and assess the successes and failures of different planting methods. A tour of watersheds with Tom Rutherford and a workshop at the Mesachie Lake Research Station would be planned for students from Cowichan Secondary and Cowichan Lake Secondary schools. There has been great buy-in from Cowichan High and great support from Social Planning Cowichan. Qu'wutsun Tribes Elders will be at Bright Angel Park to share their knowledge. Summer projects outside of school will bring young people back to the same watershed sites over 3 summers.

Joe Saysell, Friends of the Cowichan: Joe reported disturbing numbers for Coho and Chum and once again talked about the urgency to close the upper river from the 70 Mile trestle to the weir to be closed for four months as a way to bring the fish populations back. He asked for letters of

support for the call to change angling regulations to the Minister in order to avoid the same collapse as in other rivers.

Pam Jorgenson, Mosaic: Snow curtailed activities. For safety and to avoid damage to roads, gates have been closed to the public. The hope is to open them for public access on the weekends. The delays on Highway 18 have been extended. Pam will provide forest ecology education at Heather camp ground in the summer and will be asking Genevieve Singleton for Cowichan Lake Lamprey information.

CLSS: The Environmental Stewardship Class at Cowichan Secondary is working on essays, making informative signs and is caring for salmon eggs in their classroom.

Many thanks to Jamieson Atkinson and Kelsie Murchy, British Columbia Conservation Foundation for presenting on their “Log Boom, Ocean Noise impact On Adult Chinook Survival Study”

Upcoming talks:

February 17: Geoff Strong, Climate Scientist: “Climate Crisis and the ‘Net-Zero Deception’

March 17: TBA