

Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable



March 20,
2014

MINUTES

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

In attendance

Meg Loop (CLT), Shona Smith (DFO), Keith Lawrence, Pricilla Brewer & Kate Millar (CVRD), Paul Rickard & Ted Brookman (BCWF), Klaus Kuhn, Gerald Thom (CLRSS), Parker Jefferson (One Cowichan), Catherine Macey (Jean Crowder MP), Rodger Hunter (CWB), Goetz Schuerholz & Geoff Strong (CERCA), Claude Theriault & Ken Clements (Sidney Anglers), Ian Morrison (CVRD Area F), Dave Lindsay (Timberwest), Tracy Michalski (MLNRO – Fish & Wildlife), Eric Marshall (CVNS), Helen Reid (Cowichan Tribes), Don Closson (BC Parks), Derek Haupt (Western Forest Products), Shaun Chadburn (North Cowichan), Jamie Smith & Nikkie Wright (Sea Change), Elizabeth Bailey (Somenos), Genevieve Singleton (Nature interpreter), Leanne Hodges (Artist), Roger Hart (Environment Commission), Wayne Haddow (MoA)

Regrets: Tom Rutherford,

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the February meeting were circulated and approved.

Roundtable updates

Ted Brookman - Courtney/Comox application to extend sea cucumber lease going into an Important Bird Area, netting above the bottom right above the eelgrass beds. 9 foreshore leases in the last while., the last 3 sea cucumbers have been flipped to oyster.

Traci - Steelhead hatchery update, sat down with the proposal proponents and went over the entire reasons why the hatchery was discontinued, went away on different grounds. They will pursue this further, but we will not support this so it will run its course.

Linsley - Getting into the requests for PSF work on Timberwest land.

Parker - Referendum campaign to be launched this summer if Enbridge goes ahead, have over 80 committed canvassers. The drift boat take out at Skutz falls is extremely hazardous; the most experienced guide on the river lost a boat on a sweeper on Monday. Are there any improvements possible? Parks: the other side of the river is Reserve, Parks doesn't have any jurisdiction, but it is something we would have to look closely at. Also 3 dangerous sweepers at Lot 51.

Marshall - last week of the weekly swan and goose count, # of swans were higher as they are beginning migration north to bulk up. We have seen a Golden Eagle very regularly in Westholm. In Cowichan Bay, the heron rookery, the building of the Cannery and Madrone biologists are monitoring. There are about 20-30 herons sitting on nests, and even with the high level of noise they are sitting.

Loop - Successful bioengineering project completed with Dave Polster and students on March 7/8, repaired slump along a trail on Bings. Several course announcements: April 12th Bumble Bee Workshop, May 10 Pollinator Conservation Short Course, Stream Keepers May 24/25, Wetland Keepers in June, Wetland Institute to take place on Vancouver Island late summer. Many work parties scheduled along Bings and Avril Creeks, mostly riparian planting, for the RFCPP funding. Quamichan Stewards also have invasive removals and riparian plantings for RFCPP. Haddow - Climate Action initiative pilot for extreme weather and water management on farms.

Don Closson - West of Skutz falls to point 70.2, intent to add that section to the next contract by next spring, number of undefined trails (boardwalks, clearing, hardened up, rec & fish will notice some changes and keep eyes open for signs. Work done on the Fishermans' trail.

Genevieve - Trying to work with MoT to fix the slumping slopes in Cowichan Bay. Had a fantastic meeting on Friday around Eagle Heights, to map the vision of protection. Meeting with Island Timberlands, a lot of positive energy and they may be more flexible to working with us. One of the most intact and best meadow stand of Garry Oak in the world. Bluebirds are back, 5 spotted this week, setting up the aviaries this week. Eric Marshall was awarded the Freedom to Read to draw significant attention to the loss of the Eric Marshall library.

Ben Nelson - This spring will be starting projects looking at effects of seal and sea lion effects on chinook and coho.

- Supervisor for Ben's thesis. Looking at participating in integrated studies. Austin will be coming to the April meeting to talk about his findings on seal diet. Hoping to

- In the Putledge, there were 150 seal, but only 40 went into the river and ate smolts.

Sidney Anglers - Soon holding 4th Annual Salmon Derby, little over 200 fishers last year with 52 fish caught. DNA samples, 49 of 52 came from Orcas Island hatchery.

Elizabeth - Planning for the Fall Wild Wings Festival celebration of nature, looking for partners for collaborations and partnerships. Now fundraising for the viewing tower in the Marsh.

Thom - \$25,000 a year of funding for 3 years from HAT, looks like we are going ahead with the project.

Looking for college level student to lead the project. High school students are helping to lead the planting.

April 26th showing of Resilience in the Gym, 7 pm. The film has been broken down into 12, 3-5 minute segments of the film that breaks it down into easily presented format.

Shona Smith - Looking over all the PSF applications, going to a technical review soon. Lots of really good applications. This Saturday, March 22 Smolt Workshop. Science Branch wants to run a pilot project April 7th, looking at fry survival. Two more rounds of RFCPP funding. 14/15 another \$5 mil, 15/16 another \$10 mil. Big range in small to really big projects.

Jean Crowder - MP for Nanaimo/Cowichan, will be hard at it until 2015. Co-hosting a discussion panel with Skeena MP Nathan Cullen, raising awareness to remind people it's not just a pipeline but the coast line. 11 am at the Heritage Hall. Shocking number of water bottles sold in the Valley with water from other places. Multi-jurisdictional makes it ridiculous manage water. There were 12 different departments that had a say in water but no coordination. Even in our local watershed we have many jurisdictions and little communication about the cumulative impacts. Had the thought to use local water in bottled water with an educational piece around source on the label. Firmly believe that watersheds must be locally controlled and not driven by one particular interest group, but the decisions have to happen locally. Carefully designed parameters and controls, need to be careful so that there are appropriate checks and balances so that particular groups can't drive through particular agendas.

Pricilla Brewer (CVRD Environment Commission) - 12 Months of 12 Big Ideas (12/12), monthly environmentally newsletter to reach out to the wider audience in the Cowichan Valley. Have taken the 12 ideas and organized them seasonally when the issue has the most impact seasonally. Hope to create a platform for discussion for valley residents. Would like to invite Roundtable members to contribute to the newsletter June (green economy), July (don't hog the water), August (get real about climate change). 12things.ca, see "sign up here" follow the prompts for the newsletter. To submit ideas/articles, contact 12bigthings@gmail.com

Roger Hart - First Regional celebration of Earth Day on April 26th. Visiting every elementary school in the region (4500 kids).

Leanne Hodges - Coming forward to create a mural to celebrate Eric Marshall's work. Want to put a mural near/on the Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre to create something that celebrates the estuary and fish-related ecosystems.

Goetz - (1) Breach of the causeway is a go ahead, PSF funding is probably enough. Proposal was for a 1 way bridge, Westcan operators would like a 2-way bridge. Additional funding may have come through for this provided by the Westcan Lessee. Original window for bridge construction was May, some concerns from Living Rivers that would be better until July/August, so gives us more time to get all permits/permissions. Rezoning lease 103103, would like to see the area rezoned for habitat protection due to eelgrass restorations in that area. Western Stevedoring took over all the leases (intertidal and related to Westcan Terminal and Causeway), 7 altogether; (2) Intertidal log storage Lease 103103 has not been in use for 10 years, according to the Cowichan Estuary Environmental Management Plan (CEEMP), lease areas that are no longer used need to be returned to the MoE for conservation. (3) Rehabilitate the Westcan Terminal in the long-term, first thing after building the bridge is removal of invasive species, vision: to convert all of terminal into an oak meadow (or other appropriate ecosystem); greening of North shore of Westcan (approximately 400m), removing rip rap, establishing forage fish spawning habitat, strip to be planted with native

vegetation, establish a walkway along north shore from causeway to the tip of Westcan. There is one intact area of eelgrass, walk the entire causeway. (4) West Coast Environmental Law, now have a lawyer working on the issue with the grounding out log-booms, destroying the biofilm etc, so looking wheather this can be solved. (5) two joint projects with UVIC, one looking at Tourism in the Cowichan Valley and recommendations for tourism expansion to provide economic alternatives for the area, finished by May. Second study is related to Blue Carbon, comprehensive study on blue carbon with Climate Action Secretariat from the MoE, Comox Watershed project, and VIU to develop a protocol for blue carbon sequestration by estuaries (100% more efficient and effective at keeping carbon locked up, shells etc than forest ecosystems), (6) also looked at Mariner's Island to be cleaned up within this context to rehabilitate important mrsh; milling usable logs (washed up over decades). Heli Logging Ltd. estimates 2,000 logs that can be taken out to encourage salt marsh ecosystem to flourish. Use a barge and small excavator during dry summer months, need to cooperate with WFP. (7) WFP Mill Pond 7 ha never paid for use and without a lease. (8) Two proposals funding proposals submitted to Environmental Damages Fund. (9) Mobile Estuary exhibit, jointly with RBC Museum, agreed on all the text to be on display in Duncan by May 13, 2014. (10) Plans to produce a geo-referenced Cowichan Estuary Atlas in cooperation with UVIC's Geography Department.

- Would CERCA put a presentation about visioning for the May meeting?

Geoff Strong - Coordinating CERCA Symposium to be held June 14 at VIU "Expected Impacts of Climate Change on Coastal Communities and Estuaries". At this event want to form a "Vancouver Island Estuary Alliance", 9 estuary groups from all over the Island, Squamish pleased to come and intrigued to form an alliance to lobby the interests of estuaries.

Keith Lawrence - Sandy Pools update, Kerwood Lydell geomorphological assessment, the river is migrating 2.5m per year. Overtime the river will cut through and create a straight run through that area. The structures that were being contemplated (groins, underwater weirs) they would be at risk of an end around effect, thus increasing the erosive forces not deter. Updating the work plan to change the approach to phased riparian stabilization (planting, restricting access through fencing, large woody debris), shoreline stabilization and Dave Polster for that plan, reaching out to CLT and CLRSS for partnered work on it.

Ian Morrison - Trash dumping around the Lake is ramping up, this happened on Crown land and there is a lot of bush-dumping and trying to get a handle on it. Poached pregnant elk cow. Shaw Creek Regional Parkland Acquisition Fund has been at its cap each year, passed bylaw to increase amount. Means we have made room for more dollars in the next budget, reducing the regional hospital fund to increase acquisition. We at least have the capacity for if something like Shaw Creek comes up.

Business

Cowichan Agriculture Water Use & Drought Planning – Kate Millar

Water Quality Report is now available.

Drought Planning, we needed to know who needs water when. Agriculture is an amorphous group who may be hesitant to share information or not even know how much water is needed, when, and where in the watershed will those demands be.

We have a major water deficit when the agriculture community really needs it. The culture of agriculture is very strong in the valley, and with climate change impacts we need to have strategic plans. The economy is geared to forage crops, the vast majority of the activity is in the region or within CRD and forage crops get premium prices. If Agriculture wanted to grow, the community needs to look at mechanisms to store water on the land, or change way land is irrigated. Groundwater and surface water watersheds are different. In some areas groundwater is being extracted at a rate that is too much for replenishment.

We have mapped currently zoned agriculture, 50% is actually used for agricultural purposes. We would be facing water use conflict in agriculture is expanded. Climatic Adaptation responses, and settlement pattern. What happens if you have many dry years back-to-back and there there are cumulative effects on the watershed.

Climate Responsive Dyking Projects –Kate Millar

60,000 people draw water from the groundwater that would be seriously contaminated with a 200 year flood through the industrial zone of Duncan.

April 1 change of dates, not yet communicated which projects will be approved. If we get the approval, we would start a very quick project, constrained through fishery window, 4 systems of dikes, some are old sets of infrastructure and allow a set-back dike. Pseudo-landscape features at Q'wut'sun Cultural Centre.

Sea Change – Jamie Smith & Nikki Wright

2,700 eelgrass shoots planted in September 2013 and February 2014. About 30 volunteers and Cowichan Land Trust came together for these events to plant in Cowichan Bay and Genoa Bay.

Trying to find out what more we can do in these areas. Current restoration has involved underwater planting, but there is a lot of derelict material on the surface of Genoa Bay. Derelict vessels are a huge problem across the whole coast. Looking for community connections to the clean up the area so we can increase the amount of area that can be restored. In-kind contributions are important for the summer of 2014 so we can go in and plant more. See video on website.

Any ideas for companies or teams for assisting in the clean up?

- Can you make a proposal? Jeff Stubbington, has a crane on a barge, if you can make a proposal we can work with the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund. We are currently out of the funding window but small projects could get through.
- At the lake we contacted the dock building companies, the company on the causeway builds docks and structures and they all the equipment. Brian Thacker, Pacific Industrial & Marine.
- We have to remove the debris but then deposit in an appropriate location. Approach engineering at CVRD to waive dumping fees.
- on the foreshore there is piles of different debris and garbage.
- Need some trucks to transport the waste out. The fry use in Genoa Bay is significant. Trying to restore more to what is existing.

Enforcement - Gerald Thom

Everyone is frustrated with the lack of the enforcement at the local level. The reality is 3-5 years before any significant form of enforcement comes to be. DFO no longer has the stick of enforcement, which the Province was counting on and now has no power, so perhaps we need to come together as a collective to create ideas and put pressure onto the system. In the period where we have no enforcement, infractions happen at least once a week. Fundraising and grant raising for a local enforcement strategy. Public shaming folk into doing the right things. There are a ton of people doing positive things, so use the press to put light onto the bad? Have some credibility.

Enforcement Task Team. Maybe we can try to do something different, like the stewards to be collecting evidence, use West Coast Law to take people to court.

- River Keepers Model. Boats went out on a weekly/daily basis on the Hudson, went viral across the states. Citizens taking pictures, keeping records, bringing it forth to make sure folk know that people are watching and brining it as close to the courts as we can. Nikki would like to be a part of this.
- "poor boxes" to fund conservation officers to attend areas of the lake.
- Need a mini-roundtable meeting on the art of the possible. See if we can pull together a meeting with the government types. Randy Campan, West Coast fisheries rep for the Conservatives. Dan Cody a policy representative between Gov and DFO.
- Traci can bring it to the Sergeant in charge of this area. Ministry of Forest has an enforcement area, they have been very helpful but seriously limited on private land.
- Could we revisit at the April Meeting
- Could possible arrange to use the CVRD boardroom for this enforcement discussion, may not have to reinvent the wheel, the officers have it together for observing and recording. The economic development, to bring people on board that it is in our best interest to ensure enforcement
- Brainstorming meeting: Don, Gerald, Parker, Ian.
- Willie: the guys on the ground want to do the job. We have to be careful because we are being watched. The proverbial poop will hit the fan, so don't give up. We may seem like we aren't doing much, but we need people to go through the process and recording. Need good documentation, need impeccable records, need the pressure. Clyde can go out when some of the work with their authority.

ACTION: Brainstorming "first step" meeting to take place within the CVRD Boardroom with interested parties..

Next Meeting

April 17th.