

August 20, 2015

MINUTES

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

In attendance

Meg Loop (CLT), Keith Lawrence & Kate Millar (CVRD), Paul Rickard (BCWF), Parker Jefferson (One Cowichan), Rodger Hunter (CWB), Ian Morrison (CVRD Area F), Klaus Kuhn (Area I), Eric Marshall & Carol Hartwig (CVNS), Helen Reid (Cowichan Tribes), Don Closson (BC Parks), Derek Haupt (Western Forest Products), Shaun Chadburn (North Cowichan), Genevieve Singleton (Nature interpreter), Joe Saysell (Friends of the Cowichan), Ray Demarchi, (retired biologist), Alistair MacGregor (fed. NDP Candidate), Rod Carswell, Jean Atkinson & Di Gunderson (CLRSS), Barry Hetschko (SMWS), Martha Lescher (private citizen), Bob Crandall & Ashley Pifko (CLSES), Dave Lindsay (Timberwest), Morgan Kennah (Island Timberlands), Ken Clements (Sidney Anglers), Tracy Fleming & Candace Charlie (Cowichan Tribes)

Regrets: Rob Lawrence, Emily Doyle-Yamaguchi, Cheri Ayers

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the July meeting were circulated and approved.

Roundtable Updates

Eric Marshall- Busy Place Creek now has interpretative signage with three panels in place.

Keith Lawrence – Sandy Pools shoreline stabilization planting in the riparian area project is now completed. Shoreline plantings are progressing. Some plantings are hit very hard by drought. Water Quality studies are in the final report writing stages.

Joe Saysell – Wrapped up fry salvage programme. Crayfish are anecdotally in decline, looking ahead at a study to be done on the crayfish. Working on regulations on the Upper River to protect spawning areas in the winter season. Addressed logging concerns.

Ray Demarchi – Well on the way with the Liquid Waste Management project, able to apply for the Amendment to relocate effluent from the River to directly to Satellite Channel. End of November for final timeline for submission to the Ministry.

Shaun Chadburn – 40-50% reduction in municipal water use after Stage 3 restrictions put in place (no lawn watering).

Denis Poppleston – Working hard as a crew to reduce water consumption.

Ian Morrison – Lizard Lake fire is having an impact. Engineering firm interested in Ashburnum Creek for a microhydro project.

Carol Hartwig – Western Sandpipers and Least Sandpiper Survey (aka Peep Survey), these two species are tiny birds at tide-line. Chemainus and Cowichan Estuary. Citizen science survey with PhD Candidate from SFU. 4 days in July and 4 days in Aug. 28 birds in July, 300-400 birds in Aug, migrate through. Up to 50% of their diet is mud biofilm, links to ongoing protection of the estuary.

Paul Rickard – Working with DFO stock assessment for the coast, each chinook caught has a bartag put in its mouth, a photo is taken to assess visual stock, DNA samples matched to barcode. Otolith checked for hatchery/wild, to determine where are all these fish hanging out. DNA testing on the Chinook being caught in Satellite Chanel in Feb, most fish are from Seattle.

Kate Miller – Bylaw at the Province in terms of the Cowichan, Weir, and water issues. Another bylaw at the 3rd reading for sediment management. Received some funding from Province to develop a long-term sediment and log jam strategy, which has now been approved by DFO. Working on the legal work to be allowed to do this on a regular basis. We do not currently have the legal authority to go in this year. Dykes to be started this winter from the Silver Bridge and Allenby to protect the Industrial Park. Considering a similar bylaw for the Koksilah system, to be discussed in the future with the Board. Heather Mountain Snowpillow, meeting with contractor and Province to address deficiencies and clean it up. Snow pillow infers snow, attempting to find funding to include a weather monitoring system. Flood early warning meters installed and how best to develop an alarm system for the lower river system.

Dave Lindsey – Carry out a debris clearing from Skutz Falls fishway, put a plan together for after fire hazard reduces. Knotweed trial out at Caycuse for annual herbicide treatments, try to determine effectiveness and some manual treatments being carried out as well.

Derek Haupt – Dredging carried out with no environmental incidents.

Bob Crandall – stated that without funding from Sidney Anglers there would not have been funding in time for fry salvage.

Di Gunderson – Upper River Clean up, 90 volunteers, pulled less garbage than previous years, looks like tubers are not dumping so much into the river. The tubing companies clean up on a weekly basis. Riparian visits, going around the Lakefront to do 50 visits, 41 visits so far. there is a generational shift with more progressive thinking.

Parker Jefferson – One Cowichan: Wrapped up solar project, presented report to muni counsels to support appetite for solar production making the Cowichan the “Solar Capital” of BC. With the election coming up, One Cowichan is not taking a political stance, just supporting voter turnout and understand the barriers to vote. Working on the Cowichan Biodiesel Coop to expand their mandate.

Cheri Ayers, (report given by Genevieve): funding has been reconfirmed to continue working on the chinook project.

Genevieve Singleton: Bring Back the Bluebird Project, from 5 years ago of 0 birds, to this year 77-84 birds. Overseeing a Citizen Knotweed cutting project. No new news re Eagle Heights.

Business

Lake levels and river flows – Brian Houle

See presentation.

- Not a good story: water will run out Sept 28th. Lake Reserves at 14% already.
- Mill is doing what they can to reduce water consumption.

- Very dependent on rain for this fall, but the forecast is not looking good for this. The Pacific "Blob" and record setting El Nino may mean we will miss the fall rains.
- Is there anything we can be doing for next year because we may be running out of water for next year too.
 - For CVRD to go any further on the raising the weir issue, they need to go through the legal process. New bylaw waiting for Provincial approval. fundraising, staff time, corporate relations etc to go forward with this quickly.

Fry Salvage – Parker Jefferson & Bob Crandall

Provided presentation. On Tuesday mornings a group has been going out to check out salvaging fry in tribs in the lake: Shaw, Utility, and Meade Creek. Roberson, Ashburnham, Sutton, and Nixon. Found evidence in Sutton, Ashburnham, and Robertson. This group went out weekly or bi weekly to monitor storage pools and rescuing fry stranded. 100,000 fry saved, should be 1,000 adult fish able to return. Thank you for this most interesting presentation.

Update on Current River Crisis – Rodger Hunter

We may be slow to get things done, but we are learning. At the Flows Working Group meetings everybody shares information. First thing that is looked at is Brian Houle's presentation. As of Sept 28th can no longer hold 4.8 cubic metres. By mid-October this can be very grim. Catalyst is planning a maintenance mode for Oct in planning for the worst. We are at 182 net migrations up stream of chinook, over 60cm, we have found sockeye in the River. We know they are not in the few pools below the weir, probably in some deeper pools that are getting cold water, ramping down metabolism to survive. The summer run of Chinook were the dominant run, are these fish the remnants of that run? What a way to treat the remnant of a run. Flow is 4.5cms, there have been monitoring and a plan in place. BCCF has been hired to oversee this monitoring, looking through the lens of the Environmental Appeal Board. Craig Whiteman will be the overseer. Planning for events such as trucking, digging a trench into the sub terrarium flow, etc.

Communication events taking place. Completing survey's to gauge residents' understanding of where their water comes from, very few actually know. Conservation has been a big push: public events, Water Superheros. Need to address farming still.

The water license, raising the weir; questions of who takes out the license? Environmental Appeal board: Is there significant harm? Up to the high water mark there is no issue for damage to private land. Downstream benefits were acknowledged as important. Process is related to the amount of potential harm, our process was overdone. Final factor was erosion; this isn't above the high water so erosion wasn't an issue. Pointed out that an Environmental Appeal Process does not set a precedent, we need to go through the same process. The Water Basin Plan referenced compensation, and this was a mistake as compensation sets an expectation amongst those affected. It is just a plan, not policy. Need to proceed with a thorough transparent process. The issue now is "How much water?" At least 60cm above weir, 75 looks more appropriate. Build the weir for greater capacity to plan for long term adaption if necessary.

Short term license: Take out a 24 month license under the water sustainability act, to take for storage. One can apply and then do all the studies etc for the big application. Catalyst is logical for holding the license, huge chunk of money to get there, and take into consideration sustainability going forward and who will always hold responsibility?

Need to look ahead at the Short Term and Long Term License. Take advantage of the crisis to achieve change.

Next Meeting

Sept 17th, 2015

Ideas to bring forward:

- Logging in the Watershed, perhaps a day event to talk respectfully and collaboratively.
- Need to look at the management of the Dinsdale Farm, land and operated by the Nature Trust, mandate environmental. Local lease for the production of forage crops for the waterfowl, formally farmed, dyked and blocked off the freshwater challenges that were also flooded. Blind channels and poor conditions. \farmer applies great quantity of liquid manure in large quantity. Need to look at the actual management of the farm and help restore the hydrological cycle.
 - Invite the Nature Trust to the meeting for a 10 year planning visioning debrief on that property.
- Koksilah focussed session.