

COWICHAN STEWARDSHIP ROUNDTABLE NOTES www.cowichanstewardship.ca

DATE: THURSDAY, AUGUST 16, 2021: 9am to 12:00 pm Bright Angel Park

Questions? Write to co-chairs at cowichanstewardshiproundtable@gmail.com

We met meeting on the lands of Coast Salish peoples. Everyone is always welcome. Please feel free to arrive and leave meeting whenever necessary. **The Roundtable works together in a collaborative, kind and respectful manner at all times.**

- Please set up and be ready for meeting by 8:45 am to allow for glitches.
- Welcome and acknowledgement that we meet on Coast Salish peoples' land
- Regrets: Jane Kilthei: Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre (CENC)
- Attendees: Tom Rutherford: Cowichan Watershed Board (CWB), Genevieve Singleton: co-chair Cowichan Stewardship Round Table (CSRT), Parker Jefferson, co-chair CSRT, Barry Hetschko: Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society (SMWS) and Cowichan Valley Naturalists (CVN), Rick Bryan: Recreational Paddlers, Melissa Nottingham: Community Advisor at Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Jim Deck: Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society (CLRSS) and Save Our Holmes Society (SOH) Karen Deck: SOH, Heidi Grant: Coastal Invasive Species,(CIS)Tim Kulchyski, Cowichan Tribes biologist, Jeff Strong: climate scientist, Peter Wood: BC Parks, Neil Anderson: Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society, Dave Polster: restoration

CSRT Business

- Karen Deck is glad to help the CSRT by taking notes.
- Upcoming meetings: Meeting by Zoom on October 21, 2021

Round the Table: Everyone introduces themselves with name and affiliation, if any. After this, anyone who wishes to give an update can. Speakers will be kept to a time limit. **Please remember to be kind and respectful, negativity about other Roundtable members will not be tolerated. We are here to share information.**

Parker Jefferson, CSRT: told of the apparent collapse of steelhead; e.g., record lows on Skeena. 35,000 needed to meet escapement, only 5,000 are expected. Smithers economy depends on steelhead, so there is a desire to shut the fishery down. Other rivers, (Thompson, Fraser, Columbia) are experiencing similar numbers. The Blob (warm water in N. Pacific) seems to be affecting food for steelhead. Hatchery fish from Japan also are making an impact, eating steelhead food. Climate change is also seen as a cause of the collapse.

Genevieve asked how the fry rescue is going. Parker reported that the wet spring allowed many fry to make it out by themselves, necessitating a rescue of ¼ the usual amount. Parker said that there is so much gravel in the tributaries that the river flows under the gravel. Parker attributes this to deforestation and the erosion of banks. Rescuers have to wait until pools have shrunk enough to access the fish (10-12") of water, but contain enough food for the fry. Coho have a life cycle like sockeye. They hatch in streams, live in the lake, go to the ocean then come back to streams. The biggest fish in Cowichan Lake are gobbling up fry. Chum make it out quickly; there is no need for rescue.

Karen Deck, SOH: Save Our Holmes has made a new video on Mosaic's announced Cut Block B. It and other videos are available to view on our YouTube Channel "Save Our Holmes". It has numerous underground springs, some of which feed into Cowichan Lake and provide the cold water that Kokanee salmon benefit from. It is on the east end of the community near Spring Beach. We also made a video for Vancouver Island Water Watch Coalition. Many thanks to Don Kitsch, our talented videographer. Mosaic has offered to take us on a tour of 2 other cut blocks.

Tom Rutherford, CWB: Fry salvage has changed since the '90s when salvaged fry were kept in containment where water was over 17degrees. The temperature and the stress caused by marking them to assess their survival contributed significantly to fatalities. More fry are stranded now. The grant for the weir, which Watershed Board and CVRD received to increase storage in the lake has allowed for investigation into upstream impacts, which lake front owners will be able to access digitally. The Conservation License for the extra 70cm of storage in the weir is still up in the air, with provincial government ministers unresponsive. Cowichan Tribes received a grant to search for the license holder. Partners will meet over the next 9 months to a year, resulting in what Tom feels will be a government-to-government agreement or partnership. The Koksilah watershed sustainability planning process is government to government. The enforceable plan is putting ecological benefits first. It is a collaborative management model. Lydia Hwitsum is leading. 50 water licence holders are affected with a revenue loss of \$1million if unable to use the water flowing at 9%. A grant from a BC stimulus package will support 2 initiatives: A Watershed Sustainability Plan geared to ensuring enough water to support salmon. It will include a sonar counter and camera to get species composition, traps in spring, gather environmental and hydrological data. All this to see what is an absolute minimum amount of water to support salmon.

Rick Bryan, Paddlers: Paddle sport group took part in both river clean-ups. He was encouraged by how clean the river was. People are busy on the river and signing up for clubs. A new white-water club is starting up in a few weeks.

Barry Hetschko, SMWS, CVNS: Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society and Cowichan Valley Naturalists are testing water temperature and turbidity, depth and width on Koksilah. Cowichan Tribes, Watershed Board, UVic. representatives are working with Dr. Tom Gleason with a grant for "Koksilah Connections". They will be working next year on conductivity rather than turbidity. It could turn into a 5-year program. SMWS is working on stream enhancement along Averill Creek doing spawning bed enhancement. It's Wild Wings season with a series of great events planned.

Melissa Nottingham, DFO The fish fence on the Cowichan by the Black Bridge is back. The environmental science class at Cowichan High School is doing place-based learning; e.g., Streamkeepers course. She is glad to work with such an engaged and curious group.

Dave Polster, Restoration: talked about restoration work on Stoltz Bluffs and KGL engineering sites.

Genevieve Singleton, CSRT: spoke about the CLRSS art show "Watersheds Through the Lens of Art". She enjoyed her fish print making with children in Lake Cowichan at the Cowichan Lake Arts and Culture Event The heat dome had impacts on cedar and shellfish. Also spoke of the Knockenback Knotweed Team (Dave Lindsay, retired Professional Forester, Cheri Ayers, Dave Polster, Genevieve Singleton, all biologists, removing Knotweed, an invasive plant species by pulling rather than using herbicides. It has been successful in 5 plots over 5 years in Bright Angel Park.

Heidi Grant, CIS: is the new operations coordinator for Coastal Invasive Species. Welcome Heidi! They are working on knotweed and giant hogweed mostly. She is excited to learn more about non-herbicidal approaches to removing invasive species.

Tim Kulchyski, COWICHAN TRIBES: is working on a great number of projects; too many to count! Gravel removal on the river, working with BCCF trapping steelhead and rainbow trout, Maple Bay vegetation die off, Black Bridge project, monitoring marine conditions (many small spills) with the Salish Sea Initiative “protectors”.

Neil Anderson, SMWS: we welcomed Neil to his first Roundtable, he will bring a generator for River Day.

Jim Deck, CLRSS: The CLRSS along with the Tube Shack hosted the 2021 River Cleanup on September 11.

Members of the CLRSS participated in water sampling of the Cowichan Lake and River throughout the summer. One group tested some of the beaches and popular swimming holes for sunscreen in the water on behalf of the BCCF. They also conducted surveys to see if sunscreen was being used and whether it was fish friendly or unfriendly. Another group were out in boats measuring water temperatures at various depths around the lake. The CLRSS and the Cowichan Lake Arts Council are hosting the Watershed Through the Lens of Art Show at the Cowichan Lake Community Centre until September 25.

Genevieve spoke to the group about preparations for Quw’utsun Sta’lo’ Skweyul.

Finances: BC Parks donated \$9,000. Area E donated \$500; Allison Nicholson is the director for Area E. CVRD Area F also donated \$500. Ian Morrison is the Director for Area F. After this meeting Mosaic made a donation of \$500. An individual made a donation of \$100. All of these donations are deeply appreciated.

Regarding food for Quw’utsun Sta’lo’ Skweyul:

There will be smoked fish prepared by Jared Qwustenuxun Williams. Jared is kindly donating his time doing this. Fish was donated by Cowichan Tribes, Philomena Williams and others. Fry bread will be ordered from Bubba’s Kitchen, 200 pieces at \$3 each. Local fruit is being bought from the Cowichan Green Community. True Grain Bakery in Cowichan Bay has donated hundreds of baked goods. The rest of the meeting was spent tying up loose ends for the event.

Meetings are the 3rd Thursday of the month, except August.