

Round table Report
June/2023 SEHAB meeting
SEHAB Rep Don Hicks, NCVI
CA: Jacob Melville

Summary

1. Any issues that are affecting groups and their projects: Tsolum River pumpkin fish population continues to grow.
2. Any positive things that are directly related to DFO: The River Never Sleeps Festival

Group reports

Fanny Bay Salmonid Enhancement Society

“The River Never Sleeps Festival”

FBSES has over the years organized this festival drawing in most of the island enhancement groups, Streamkeepers groups, related non-profit groups, Pacific Streamkeepers Federation, Pacific Salmon Foundation, DFO, and other related environmental companies. This year was no exception, with 40 plus booths and 700 to 800 general public. In addition, FBSES has organized a food concession, live music and coho fry release. This event is very popular with many families coming and spending the day. In addition, the enhancement groups from Goldstream Volunteer Salmonid Enhancement Association in the south Vancouver Island to Quatse River Hatchery in the north island attend and allows for dialogue between groups.

Judy Ackinclose and her volunteer members should be acknowledged as this festival is a major undertaking each year benefiting all enhancement groups.

Tsolum River Restoration Society

In 2022, a population of Pumpkinseed Sunfish (*Lepomis gibbosus*) was discovered in Wildwood Marsh in the Dove Creek area of Courtenay, BC. In early May of 2023, a fish fence and trap box were installed on Smitt Creek, a tributary of the Tsolum River that connects to Wildwood Marsh. Between early May and early June of this year, 3590 pumpkinseeds were captured. Most were yearlings, but there were also three-year-old fish (confirmed using otolith sampling). Unfortunately, these three-year-old fish have also been found in the lower main stem of the Tsolum River. The Tsolum River Restoration Society is certain that if the fence was installed earlier in the season, significantly more Pumpkinseed Sunfish would have been captured (two to three times the current catch at least), demonstrating a potential major invasive species problem for the watershed. Any guidance or support from DFO or the province regarding the control of this invasive species would be appreciated.

Brooklyn Creek Watershed Society

We are thrilled to report BCWS received a donation of \$5,000 from Tree Island Yogurt to help with the work ongoing at Birkdale Farm. Thank you, Merissa and Scott, for the kind and generous donation. The donation reflects their commitment to be stewards of the natural world. Tree Island Yogurt sources some of its milk from Birkdale Farm, owned by Guy Sim. They are very supportive of BCWS's planned 4-year project to restore 1.6 km of Brooklyn Creek's 6 km length located on the farm property. Last year, their staff volunteered with the planting. This year, they made a significant contribution to the project with their cash gift.

Last year, BCWS was successful in obtaining a grant from Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF) to carry out habitat improvements along the lower 450m of the stream, just upstream from Guthrie Road. This year, BCWS was successful in obtaining a \$24,000 grant from PSF to work on the section immediately upstream. In addition to the donation made by Tree Island Yogurt, this project has received donations from LaFarge and Leighton Contracting Ltd. of spawning gravel and rock over the next 3 years valued at \$12,000.

This work could not be accomplished without the cooperation of the landowner, Guy Sim, funding from PSF, professional oversight of the works by Current Environmental Ltd, and the countless hours our volunteers committed to the project. This is a wonderful partnership that is reaping huge benefits to the watershed!

Little River Enhancement Society

LRES members installed the new aluminum counting fence for our outward coho smolt program. This fence is to replace our wood fence that was broken twice following heavy rains last year. Just after installation we saw heavy rains which tested the strength of the new fence and which held.

We have received approval for our PSF grant application and section 11 from the province to proceed with the removal of three blockages and re-gravelling of several spawning areas. We will be meeting with Current Environmental on scheduling a timeline for the project in July.

This year's chum fry and coho smolts were released during April and May by our members above the Little River estuary. At each release we saw numbers of public come out and ask questions about salmon and the watershed.