



SEHAB Roundtable Template (May 2015)

Our Vision: Pacific Region communities living sustainably within the natural limitations of healthy ecosystems supporting abundant and biologically diverse Pacific salmonids.

Our Mission: SEHAB C.A.R.E.S. SEHAB is the voice of the volunteer community dedicated to:

- Communicating
- Advocating
- Representing
- Educating, and
- Supporting its endeavours

SEHAB and the community have a shared commitment of ensuring functioning ecosystems supporting viable, genetically diverse and abundant indigenous fish populations.

SEHAB Member: Jack Minard

Area: Central Vancouver Island

Community Advisor: Dave Davies

Date: May 15, 2015

Key Issues: Water Quantity, Water Quality, Water Management

What top three points can you distill from community input to take to DFO RHQ?

1. Great concerns about low flows this summer
2. Low flows mean high temperatures, easy predation and serious water quality issues due to lack of dilution
3. Communities in our area are just beginning to understand the rapid runoff scenarios we have built and are beginning to look at rainwater management and storage as a major hedge against a changing climate that appears to be delivering less snowpack, heavier winter rains causing flooding and a drying landscape.

Stories:

Brooklyn Creek

A political standoff between the City of Courtenay, Area B of the Comox Valley Regional District and the Town of Comox prevents a restoration and re-connecting of the headwaters of Brooklyn Creek.

The Crown Isle subdivision in the City of Courtenay sits on a deep gravel headwater which, during the construction of this high-end golf course community, severed the connectivity of the headwater from the creek. Further exacerbated by degraded tributaries, deforested sections of the remaining headwaters and channels that become easily over-subscribed add up to a hapless situation for Brooklyn Creek.

This story brings into focus how important restoring connectivity of urbanized streams actually is. With coho numbers seeing a bit of rebound in Georgia Strait in-migration has increased over the last couple of years but, passage issues, too much water with little refuge followed by too little water for rearing continues to take its toll on this productive coho stream.

Efforts to combat flooding have not extended across political boundaries with the Town of Comox taking the brunt of the expense to the tune of well over \$1,000,000.00 in the past 8 years just to mitigate flooding with nothing done to actually solve the problem at the headwaters.

This has been a major challenge with StreamKeepers backing off in the face of corporate (Crown Isle Management) and political (City, Town and RD) refusing to work towards a holistic solution.

CoalWatch

Despite the effective work of this ad hoc, citizen-based organization dedicated to stopping coal mining in the region another 18 – 22 mines are under scrutiny by a plethora of mining companies.

The Province recently did not accept the Compliance Coal's bid to begin mining in Union Bay it was not for environmental reasons per se but was due to an incomplete application. In the meantime, the Province has given the nod to 5 locations for further exploration and testing.

The Oyster River Enhancement Society (ORES) has a hatchery recently severed from the surrounding private property and made into a regional park with over 500 members and an ongoing and effective enhancement program.

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ORES is extremely concerned that even the digging of test holes can lead to water quality issues and are attempting to get baseline water quality information and an ongoing water quality monitoring program.

ORES ran into problems trying to understand what they should be testing for so that the baseline would show the effects immediately of any discharge changing water quality. After over a year of research funded through their own funding they are only now beginning to understand what they should be testing for.

The challenge here is that there is little support for such Herculean efforts on the part of a local NGO while it appears that the local Economic Development Society, the Provincial and Federal interests in promoting mining receive the support. Local stewards and enhancement volunteers find this an untenable and extremely frustrating scenario.

Estuary Working Group

Eel grass is being planted, seine surveys are being completed, data over many years is being compiled, land acquisition projects, buffers and walkways and restoration of foreshore amenities and functions begins to scratch the surface of Project Watershed's incredible journey to restore the second largest estuary in BC.

Issues Specific to SEHAB's Work Plan:

SEHAB Work Plan	Local Issue, Specific Examples	Actions by Community or DFO	SEHAB Opportunity
Wild Salmon Policy (Stock Assessment, Habitat)	Lack of understanding, based on acceptable scientific standards, of limiting factors. ORES, as above, Brooklyn Creek, as above and the Tsolum River all have serious degradation problems	The Tsolum River Restoration Society has assessed the watershed for stocks, habitat, channel morphology and riparian health and will be producing a watershed recovery plan	To follow the progress of the Tsolum Recovery Planning process and discern if there are principles, concepts and/or ideas that emerge that can be transferable
Beach Wrack Harvesting	Sunshine Coast and ECVI have had permits issued to harvest the beached seaweed left at high water. The issue is damage to foreshore forage fish habitat	Several members of several communities have brought this issue to authorities and have found that although forage fish is a salmon issue the province has been given the authority and the Ministry of Agriculture has issued the licenses	To follow the research project hosted by VIU and the Shellfish Research Station to determine impacts to forage fish and encourage either the BMP's that emerge or if found to be harmful the cessation of this activity
Aquaculture	Mixed messages regarding aquaculture and frustration generally that "enhancement", as done by small community hatcheries, is not "aquaculture"!	Community are happy generally with a new focus on BMP's and in some cases more technical assistance from our CA	Continue to advocate for enhancement as a Fisheries (DFO) priority and continue with the BMP's but let "licensing" and the definition of this Fisheries activity as aquaculture go.

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<p>External Communications</p>	<p>Lack of understanding of DFO's role in protecting fish and fish habitat. A continually changing (and reducing) ability to affect any form of monitoring or response to reports let alone actual protection or enforcement.</p>	<p>Groups are attempting to educate themselves about the new Fisheries Act, the Habitat Protection Plan and now the Restoration Framework.</p> <p>There is little to no information forthcoming from Department</p>	<p>Continue to advocate for informational resources that can be disseminated to groups, for better planning processes (i.e. Professional Reliance Model) and better outcomes.</p>
<p>Many newcomers arriving in this area</p>	<p>A lack of information/education regarding our salmon, the fragility of the habitat, the importance of a health riparian zone, etc.</p>	<p>Groups are finding it difficult to get information out to the new arrivals</p>	<p>Perhaps SEHAB could facilitate or encourage department to provide easily absorbed/understood information. If we cannot regulate lawns to the high water mark and protect off channel habitat or wetlands we must try another tack and that involves education</p>

Submissions, Comments from Groups:

No specific comments received.