

Round table Report
November/2022 SEHAB meeting
CA Melissa Nottingham-South Vancouver Island
Rep: Ian Bruce

Summary

1. Any issues that are affecting groups and their projects that are directly related to DFO
Awaiting more info on PSSSI and possible funding to support existing steward groups; Question: How will BCSRIF, PSSSI and SSI all work with/ address reconciliation efforts? BCSRIF program oversold before this round begins; application process onerous compared to previous rounds; work with Provincial govt to implement a Shoreline Protection Act like RAR
2. Any positive things that are directly related to DFO
Recent hiring in FHFPP and PSSSI encouraging – thoughts concerning experience
3. Any things coming up that DFO should know about
Capacity issues exist within FN and their new hires that will need to be supported.
4. Any issues that are affecting groups and their projects that are related to other agencies.
Changes in Water Act Section 11 Notifications, staffing at provincial level; low flows and drought – BC has to do more; DFO leadership in base flow maintenance.

Group reports

Peninsula Streams Society –now Peninsula Streams and Shorelines
350 members, over 150 regular volunteers, 7 staff (down to 5); one MITACs PhD candidate –‘predator challenge’ on hatchery coho

PSS co-chairs with Project Watershed of the 9 member BC Forage Fish Monitoring Network representing over 250 FF egg survey volunteers sampling over 400 beaches in the Salish Sea. Busy fields season:

Streams – Colquitz main channel restoration with D of Saanich, Dave Clough \$100,000

- Chalet Creek culvert replacement – arched open bottom, \$650K fully funded fish habitat; 21 volunteers out planting over 300 native plants this last Saturday
- Swan Creek – 2 new riffles, 3 repaired

Atmospheric Rivers

- Millstream: Atkin Roads Culvert Spillway repairs \$80K partially funded; new camera; PIT tag array last spring counted out 800+ outmigrants..array in place for 3 yr old returns in 2024
- Hagan/Graham & Millstream Creeks habitat assessments and CTT distribution; new electroshocker (PSF –TY!); genetic tissues samples to BC Fisheries; FFSBC

Beaches – Forage fish volunteers revived from summer slowdown – last year over 300 samples on 70 beaches, over 50 samples positive; 8 sets of equipment and 30 volunteers out; Beach restoration projects for FF: Portage Inlet Beach, Songhees Walkways.

Rain Gardens: 4 constructed and planted this summer

Science: Pit tags with stock assessment BCCF; eDNA sampling off beaches; 6PPD sampling

Water quality – 7 streams working with local groups – looking into water rangers

Stewardship: engendered new Friends of Millstream Watershed; 25 members, Board has reps from 4 municipalities; Streamkeepers training for Dec 4/5

Volunteers need to RSVP to limit numbers

Some of the Others: late fall rains have had major impacts on returns; Sooke reported low numbers to date, Goldstream chum picking up but still lower than normal but coho looking like they'll be enough for 2022 BY – and of course without Goldstream Hatchery as our satellite coho supply we couldn't support underperforming streams in our area.

As always, great support from PSF

Cowichan Region Input for the Lower Vancouver Island Area SEHAB Roundtable

- submitted by Stephanie Cottell, Cowichan Community Land Trust / LVI SEHAB alternate
- Info gleaned from recent Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable (CSRT) notes, a grassroots collaboration of groups that meets monthly

Summary:

1. Any issues that are affecting groups and their projects that are directly related to DFO

- Uncertainty about jurisdiction
- Concerns about microplastics and other run-off
- Drought conditions and impact on Salmon and other watershed impacts

2. Any positive things that are directly related to DFO

- Thanks to CA Melissa Nottingham for presenting at the CSRT in August

3. Any things coming up that DFO should know about

- See details below

4. Any issues that are affecting groups and their projects that are related to other

Agencies.

- Forestry and development pressures and impact on the watersheds.

Details of interest:

- Parker Jefferson of the Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable (CSRT) is involved in the salmon enhancement survey and recovery of fish from side streams and ponds. Interesting to note that Sockeye evolved to rear on Cowichan Lake tributaries. Salmon, will make our escapement goal for salmon. We have seen less than half of the salmon go past (Mid October). The Weir was working, and so far so good on the Chinook count. The fence has to come out soon, but we have gotten a much longer count. Getting a lot of good work done with the extended season.
- **Melissa Nottingham (CA with DFO)** was the guest at the August CSRT and spoke to the recovery of fish from side streams and ponds and the importance of volunteers being licensed with DFO to ensure that relocation efforts are sustainable.
- **Goetz Schuerholz, Chair of the Cowichan Estuary Restoration Association.** Few citizen science projects on the go. Bat Survey, 5 strategic locations - extended to 10 locations using expensive echolocation tools. There are 16 bat species in the watersheds. Suspect that with Climate Change, they are migrating northward. Another forage fish habitat monitoring, initiated by Bill Heese and Nature Center. Interns from Cowichan Secondary School that participated in the monitoring. Second phase of the microchip survey (Simon Fraser/UBC/Canadian Wildlife Service) - is now underway to identify fatty acid content of birds in the estuary and recording migration (motor station installed). Expanded the scope from sediment samples, to now involving soil samples (sources of micro-plastic pollution), to track sources from Estuary and Lower Cowichan River. We also take wildlife samples - Chinook as one of the key indicators of ecosystem health. When compared with other project watersheds (ie Courtney Estuary) - , to see how much of the microplastics are coming through the tributaries. Well equipped with researchers and support from Simon Fraser.
- Cheyenne Williams, Cowichan Tribes staff is scoping a riparian guardian program with funding from Healthy Watersheds Initiative. This would include stewardship and technical training program. Eduardo Souza is looking at developing a list of designated protected areas and is seeking information on how to engage in private land management. Currently doing surveys and information gathering on ecological health and environmental flows. Good potential to have Cowichan Tribes members back on the land.
- John Stewart, Cowichan Tribes has been involved in doing tidal samples for climate resiliency with the Nature Trust and provided an update on the Fraser River Sockeye Return for the Food Fish Recovery. Also involved in the Dike Assessment and the Olympia Pacific Oyster Sampling Survey at Mafeo Park and Transfer Beach.
- The C4 Impact (anchorage) study is developing a baseline for informing the proposed National Marine Reserve being led by the Indigenous Management Board.
- Joe Saysell, Friends of the Cowichan, spoke about Exeter Creek and Mosaic logging, and also his work in recovering fish from side streams in the upper watershed above Skutz Falls.
- Lisa Maria Fox, CWB - The CWB is coordinating a Setting the Course workshop series over the next couple of months to re-establish the direction and priorities of the CWB with its partner (CVRD/Cowichan Tribes). In advance of the workshops, we will be developing a short survey for the stewardship community, more details will come soon. Also important to note is that this workshop series may also help to determine resources needed for the CWB, as Tom has redirected his time to Weir and Koksilah WSP and Lisa is an interim Business Manager - there

will need to be a decision made in the new year regarding permanent staffing needs. The CWB Co-Chairs are developing an Op-Ed speaking to the need for the Weir given the recent drought and salmon access to spawning habitat. Government to Government Meetings were coordinated with support from CWB specifically on the Weir occurred in October with Cowichan Tribes and Minister Osborn.

- The special Quw'utsun Sta'lo Skweyul / Cowichan River Day event on September 25 was a great success. There were events held at 5 different locations throughout the Cowichan and Koksilah watersheds.

Report from Friends of Bowker Creek Streamkeepers

- In January we placed 28,000 Chum salmon eggs into an incubation box in a prepared gravel bed in Bowker Creek. Emergent Chum fry were observed beside the gravel bed on two days this spring, but 5000 dead eggs were also found in the incubation box. We believe that the disappointingly high egg mortality was largely a long-term effect of the November 2021 rainstorm that did much damage in streams in our area. The stormwaters partly destroyed the rock and gravel structure that we had previously built in Summer 2021. Winter high waters limited our ability to repair the structure, resulting in our placing the incubation box further into a quiet eddy than we had intended. Siltation in that eddy appears to have suffocated many eggs in the incubation box.
- The egg supply network with DFO and Goldstream Hatchery has been supportive and helpful.
- Water quality equipment loaned to us by DFO has increased our accuracy and consistency in monitoring temperature and dissolved Oxygen.
- In September we repaired the in-stream structure for egg incubation. Our partner, Peninsula Streams and Shorelines Society, led the volunteers in the in-stream work and supplied gravel and boulders.
- We are planning on placing Chum salmon eggs in Bowker Creek again this winter.
- As newcomers, the Friends of Bowker Creek Streamkeepers had no idea of the supportive network that we would be joining. It is only with the combined assistance of Peninsula Streams, DFO, Goldstream Hatchery and other groups that Chum salmon recovery in Bowker Creek would be possible.