

**Round table Report**  
**March 2023 SEHAB meeting**  
**SEHAB Rep Don Hicks, North Central Vancouver Island**  
**CA: Jacob Melville**

## Summary

1. All groups reported that low precipitations in October and November affected collection of their brood stocks.
2. Millard-Piercy Watershed Society is continuing to collect water samples for 6PPD-quinone analysis as results received to date indicate a high level of 6PPD-quinone from the bridge runoff and a lower level at the Slomp farm.

## Group Reports

### Marion Baker Hatchery

French Creek

Due to low water levels fish were held up in a pool below French Creek bridge for 10 days before they were able to come up . We were able to collect our brood stock on Nov.4 and 5 in Geickie pool which I have never seen that low in the fall. We captured 49 coho which produced some 35700 eggs which are hatching now. We also received 52000 chum eggs from the Puntledge hatchery, all are hatched and will be ponded in our main tank when they are ready in late March. All is good but are concerned with summer low water conditions with too many users of creek water.

We have to find another way to fundraise due to existing is no longer available. We receive 5000 from DFO which covers half of our operating budget for the year We do receive fish food and some extra cash for supplies or gear at year end if budget allows from DFO. Our DFO Community Advisor have been great and helped us out whenever needed Kudos to them as they have a large territory to cover.

If the DFO department is genuine about saving the salmon stock perhaps they should at least cover the operating expense of hatcheries so they can work on salmon enhancement instead of worrying about fundraising to survive

**Pete Spruit**

## **Millard-Piercy Watershed Society**

Surveys of spawning salmon throughout the accessible areas of the watershed are designed to identify spawning locations of pink, chum and coho salmon as well as relative abundance in the various areas. Estimates of total numbers of spawners are not made due to the difficulty in obtaining accurate counts in water that is frequently turbid due to heavy rain events. Also, as coho tend to spawn in the upper reaches of streams, these areas are mostly on private property where access to our volunteers is not always permitted.

Teams of two or three volunteers are assigned a particular stretch of the creeks to be surveyed weekly during autumn with the number of live and dead spawners and the number of redds to be recorded.

In 2022, due to extremely low creek levels, few salmon entered Millard Creek throughout most of the survey period. When the rains started and creek levels rose, surveying became more difficult. Early snowfalls resulted in cancellation of the surveys on November 30 and December 7 due to safety concerns.

Surveys of Millard Creek downstream of Highway 19A commenced September 21.

Elsewhere in the watershed, surveys began October 12 or later. The first salmon were observed October 27 in the lower Millard Creek when at least 10 were spotted.

Unfortunately, the species wasn't determined. On October 29 and 30 a few coho were seen in Piercy Creek on the Slomp farm. Thereafter, occasional coho were observed in Piercy Creek mainstem and in the section of Millard Creek from the railway bridge to its confluence with Piercy Creek and in the upper Millard on the Millard Meadows property.

In the latter section, on December 14, 3 or 4 dead and dismembered coho were found, likely due to otters or raccoons. Peak coho spawning in the watershed was in the section of Piercy Creek between 20<sup>th</sup> Street and Cumberland Road on December 14 when approximately 15 coho were counted.

We continued to collect water samples for 6PPD-quinone analysis from runoff from the Piercy Creek bridge on the connector highway as well as from the Slomp farm several hundred meters downstream from the bridge. Results received to date indicate a high level of 6PPD-quinone from the bridge runoff and a lower level at the Slomp farm. However, we strongly suspect that the mortality of coho smolts observed at our 2021 smolt counting operation on the Slomp farm was due to 6PPD-quinone. Sampling will continue in 2023.

**Robin Harrison**

## **Roy Creek Salmonid Enhancement Society**

Roy Creek (east Vancouver Island) remained running, albeit slowly, during the summer months from July through September allowing a healthy wild fry population to thrive. Then when the October and November rains did not appear the creek slowed to a trickle. We are hopeful that enough deep pockets of water remained to support the wild fry. However, the lack of rain and sufficient flow in Roy Creek did not allow for an adult coho return in 2022. We had the counting fence up from October 1st through to December 17th with no returns. Even when we did get a couple of days of decent flow there were no fish through the fence. On several occasions between December 1 – 16 we observed smaller coho salmon attempting to move up from the mouth of Roy Creek however there was not enough water to allow them to move much more than a few tens of meters. With the snow/rain events after December 18th there is a possibility some coho may have returned but we will not know until the smolt trap in 2024. We are ever hopeful and look forward to that wild coho surprise!

**Pam Lengyel**

## **Tahsis Salmon Enhancement Society**

We have been successful in taking all of our egg take that we wanted, however the water levels in the Tahsis River and the Leiner River were very low. We were lucky to capture the brood stock as the salmon could not make it up to the bridge and were late. The first egg take in the Leiner was Oct.18th and the next was Oct. 26th The Leiner fish are staging at the lowest pool, Hard to get up but we are still doing it. But we are doing better than the lower Island as our Community Advisor, Jacob Melville is saying to us. I don't have the names of the swimmers that swam both rivers but they could paint you a pretty good picture of both rivers with their numbers & dates, Because of low water the fish are staging very close to the ocean for some time, so it's a feast for the seals.

**Don Beamin**

## **Brooklyn Creek Watershed Society**

A lot has happened this summer with the financial help of Pacific Salmon Foundation and technical help from Current Environmental Ltd and friends. Now, the focus is on Birkdale Farm. Approximately 1.6 km of Brooklyn Creek's 6 km length is located on the property of Birkdale Farm, a dairy farm operated by Guy Sim. For 2022, BCWS received a grant from Pacific Salmon Foundation to undertake habitat improvements in the lower 450m of the stream, just upstream from Guthrie Road.

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An Overview and Level 1 Fish Habitat Assessment was conducted on Brooklyn Creek in the lower and middle reaches (between the estuary and Anderton Road) in the summer of 2021 ([Habitat Assessment link](#)). The results of the Assessment showed that the lowest reach (in Baybrook Nature Park) received a *Good* rating, the four reaches between Baybrook park and Guthrie Road (located in Mack Laing Nature Park, the Brooklyn Creek Greenway, and Salish Park) received a *Fair* rating, and the upper reach on Birkdale Farm received a *Poor* rating. As a result, this section of the creek has been prioritized for restoration works during the next four years, including summer 2022.

Much of the stream channel on the farm property is very narrow, occluded with vegetation such as willow and Reed Canary Grass. The goal is to widen the channel as much as possible, stabilize the banks, replant the riparian areas with native vegetation, install spawning gravel, and create riffle/pool habitats. Current Environmental Ltd., a local biological consulting firm, is managing the project.

The grant amount for 2022 is approximately \$20,000. However, much of the work could not be done without the help of volunteers and the generous support of local businesses. Leighton Contracting (2009) Ltd and LaFarge Courtenay Ltd in total are donating over \$12,000 worth of spawning gravel and rock over the next 4 years. BCWS is very thankful for such generosity displayed by local businesses.

The work area will require planting of native vegetation once the rains have started. Please keep an eye out for the call for volunteers.

If you have any questions regarding these activities, please leave a note on the [Contact Us page](#) and we will respond to your query. And you can sign up for the occasional emailed [updates to stay informed](#).

**Bill Upward**

## **Little River Enhancement Society**

Our members installed the incoming trap and fence, along with our counting camera at the end of September. With camera operations we can record all salmon migrating up the stream during the months of October and November. We did not see the usual fall rains and water flows remained low during the two months, and the salmon were reluctant to migrate upstream. However, we did receive two medium rain falls during the period and we were able to collect our coho brood stock. Chum returns were very low and we were only able to collect one pair of chum brood stock. Our hatchery's secondary chum egg source, Puntledge hatchery, also saw very low chum returns and was not able to supply eggs. Total salmon counted passed the camera was 664, comprising 639 coho and 25 chum. We saw 20 clipped coho adults or jacks this year, with one of the rain fall days having very murky water and the crew was unable to record clipped coho. Last year we recorded 761 salmon in the same period.

We continued to see coho at the mouth of the Little River awaiting rains and higher water flows after removing the fence. In mid-December, we received our first heavy rains and several landowners advised us that they had seen coho moving up the stream.

During the fall, our streamkeeper members found three major log blockages which were created by the heavy rains in the fall of 2021. Planning is now underway for their removal in the coming summer. These blockages do not allow fish passage to pass at low to medium flows which are the flows we experienced in October/November. As well, we will be re-gravelling spawning areas that were created in the past, and we have met with the various landowners for access through their properties.

**Don Hicks**