

Roundtable Report
2023/06 SEHAB meeting – Smithers, BC
Paul Cipywnyk, North Side Fraser Burnaby to Mission
CA: Isaac Nelson

Summary

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

Impacts of climate change on streamflow. At a recent coho smolt release on Byrne Creek in Burnaby with schoolchildren, volunteers had to monitor and assist smolts that were straying into low-water channels and stranding and push them to channels in the creek with deeper water.

Also impacts of climate change on removing invasive plant species and planting native riparian vegetation—traditional native plants may no longer be suitable for projects as climate zones shift north.

Ongoing issue of discharge of deleterious substances down storm drains into creeks. Construction site sediment, sewage overflows, road salt, etc.

Concerns about juvenile outmigration monitoring being reduced, apparently for budgetary reasons. Volunteers are questioning the reasoning from DFO for this change and want “straight answers.”

Development is hammering watersheds, and there is frustration at getting rain gardens installed. There are also concerns about rain gardens at new projects that look like “window dressing” and do not appear to infiltrate rainwater. Some municipalities mandate stormwater management for private developers but do little or nothing for civic projects.

There was disappointment that Community Advisors could not attend the SEP Workshop in Port Hardy. Rumors are they were told to cancel at the last minute. Volunteers so wonder why such cuts are made that are detrimental to community outreach and knowledge sharing.

2. Any positive things that are directly related to DFO

Groups report good communication and relations with their CA.

Despite concerns about CA attendance at the SEP Workshop in Port Hardy, the event was excellent, with lots of great sessions, tours, etc. Streamkeepers appreciate the hours put in by local Port Hardy groups, First Nations, PSKF, DFO, etc. Attendees who took the Coast Guard station & cutter tour appreciated the friendly, knowledgeable staff.

3. Any things coming up that DFO should know about

Massive development in urban and suburban watersheds that is steadily choking the life out of streams. Is there any way DFO and/or the Federal Government can promote watershed-friendly development, mandate infiltration through rain gardens, swales, and

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retention ponds, etc.? A regulatory stick that is actually enforced along with financial incentives? Yes, this is mostly a municipal and provincial issue, but the federal government certainly has ways to support better development practices.

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

There have been some communication issues with municipalities and groups that partner with them to do invasive species removal and community cleanups in watersheds that have active streamkeeper groups.

This leads to concerns about the potential impact of large groups/events in riparian areas.

For example, streamkeepers do continual garbage pickup on some streams. It would be great if municipalities would contact local streamkeeper groups before organizing public events. Some of this is likely due to new staff not being aware of the presence and activities of streamkeepers. Perhaps it would be good to promote annual “days of learning” for City staff in Parks, Planning, and Engineering departments, during which staff learn about streamkeeper groups and what they do.

Group reports

PCDHFC

The only concern the members have, and more of a "curiosity" rather than a concern is WHY the group handling the Juvenile Outmigration Monitoring is NOT counting salmon fry this year in the Coquitlam River? Why are Chinook, Chum, Pinks being EXCLUDED? Members report all "salmon" are counted every year from their recollection and tracking.

A member asked someone from the monitoring group, and they stated the budget was insufficient to cover the time. Logically this does not stand up because they have to handle the salmon fry to release them from the traps anyway, and already decided they were "salmon," so why not count and record them?

Members are practical minded, and when they are given this type of answer, their instincts tell them there is another "hidden" reason and they become suspicious of the answer received. Perhaps, if you would, explore the reasoning behind the EXCLUSIONS and advise further. Just be straight up, members are hypersensitive to political answers!

Byrne Creek

While the creek has never dried up completely, flows are getting very low during hot months, and at peak temperatures, it has gone subsurface in spots for a few days at a time. Development with accompanying lack of infiltration in the urban upper watershed is likely negatively impacting groundwater recharge. At a recent coho smolt release with schoolchildren,

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volunteers had to monitor and assist smolts that were straying into low-water channels and stranding and push them to other channels with deeper water.

Need to work more on regular and effective communication with municipal departments including Parks, Engineering, and Planning. City staff turnover results in staff with no knowledge of the watershed making uninformed proposals for activities that could impact the creek and riparian zone.