

Round table Report
February 2025 SEHAB meeting
SEHAB Rep: Stephanie Cottell Area: Lower Vancouver Island and Southern Gulf Islands
CA: Heather Wright

Summary

1. Any issues that are affecting groups and their projects that are directly related to DFO
 - otters and other elements/ poor resolution in photo monitoring: any experiences or suggestions?
 - turbidity in creeks
 - RAR is confusing especially in ALR, exemptions are very deleterious to riparian areas which dominate rural agricultural areas
 - Water Quality mapping ~ any possible support for these local efforts?
2. Any positive things that are directly related to DFO
 - local hatchery egg take targets are met and doing well
 - new incubation boxes from DFO grant funding are working well
 - Salmon and the Forest signs are going to be great! Currently being printed.
3. Any things coming up that DFO should know about
 - CSRT may do Quw'utsun Stalo Skweyul Rivers Day again in 2025 (usually it's been every 2 years but it's a great event.
 - Cowichan weir planning, fish-kill follow up/WQ work, Xwulqw'selu Watershed Planning
4. Any issues that are affecting groups and their projects that are related to other agencies.
 - RAR, water quality, erosion, jurisdictional gaps
 - Potential new initiative: Salish Sea stewardship partnership funding via Watershed Security Fund
 - Efforts towards a more effective Joint Salmon management strategy

Group reports

World Fisheries Trust

I think it would be interesting to have a discussion at the table about experiences with camera monitoring, taking into account interaction with otters.

We have struggled with this on the Colquitz, with otters interfering significantly with the photo-chamber approach and poor resolution with an approach of shooting across a more open space.

Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable

Heather Wright DFO

- *Hatcheries doing well. Egg takes target reached. Green egg estimate done. True number later. Lake Cowichan hatchery also doing well. Chum hatched before Christmas, Coho after that.*

Phaedra Douglass, Somenos Marsh Society – *better salmon returns in Bings and Averill in this 2nd year of counting. Richards Creek – no fish yet but might with rain. Recap - >1000 trees along creek and Open-Air Classroom with Cow High class; resulting from Fish Kill Response workshop in November, working with MNC to revamp water quality program to identify where nutrient inputs are coming from; going into Somenos Garry Oak program. Question about N Cow silt from development behind Walmart. Don't know. Averill Creek turbidity very high; MNC responded quickly*

Quw'utsun Cultural Connections society

Riparian Areas – what are healthy riparian areas? Comparing the regulations to whether the riparian zone is functional – understanding what is healthy, restored, functional. New GIS person (with Katie, Phaedra) – hope to develop a model. Working in Kelvin Creek. Question about RAR and how confusing. ALR land exempt – can clearcut to edge unless near house

Working on Water quality mapping starting with Kelvin Creek

Tom Rutherford, Cowichan Watershed Board. – *Pacific Salmon – made in BC Salmon Strategy. Systems failure. Model of Feds holding responsibility for salmon with Province holding responsibility for everything that affects them not working. Tom retained to learn from Pacific NW, and pushing a new model here in BC. Joint Salmon management strategy CWB - Cowichan weir, fish-kill WQ work, Xwulqw'selu Watershed Planning*

Robert Martin, Cowichan Tribes - *Marine Team working with Raincoast on WQ. First report of 4 out. Supporting Georgia Strait Alliance looking for Salish Sea stewardship partnership funding via Watershed Security Fund.*

Friends of Bowker Creek

Very briefly, I can report that our 18,000+ Chum eggs from Goldstream Hatchery went into two incubation boxes in Bowker Creek on January 8th. These were the boxes of our own design and construction, based on box designs used in DFO projects in the Campbell River area and made possible for us by a DFO grant. We did extensive in-stream testing of the boxes before receiving the eggs.

Beginning January 12, the eggs hatched over a period of a few days, and have been developing as alevins in the boxes since that time. The cassette design of the incubation box trays will keep the alevins in the tray until we release them into the stream as fry. The boxes appear to be functioning as hoped and our daily checks record excellent survival so far.

To our great good fortune, we are advised regularly by retired DFO technician Dave Ewart, who now lives in Greater Victoria.

This year we plan to build one more box, which will allow us a capacity of about 25,000 Chum eggs. We plan to request that quantity for next winter.

Our first returns of adult Chum could appear this October-November. Due to high mortality of eggs and alevins in our first two years of incubation, we don't expect large returns. It is our hope that the new box design and placement this year will greatly improve egg and alevin survival. Looks good so far.