

**Smithers & Northwestern BC
February 2025 SEHAB Report
Alternate Representative: Marjorie Lieuwen
Community Advisor: Vacant**

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

a. Chicago Cr Community Environmental Enhancement Society

- There is currently no Community Advisor in Smithers and we need to have one. The current Stewardship Directorate staff is Trevor Sowers and although he makes a good effort to come out to Smithers from his location in Prince Rupert (4 hour drive away), he cannot respond quickly should we need his help. Also – with DFO travel restrictions his travel is not always approved and travel on short notice is impossible.
- It is the Chicago Cr Community Environmental Enhancement Society's 30th year anniversary. The project started in 1994 and we incorporated as a Society in 1995. There has been nothing from SEP to acknowledge our 30 year dedication to the Stewardship and Community Involvement Program. It is like our work is not appreciated and we have been dropped off the radar. This is hurtful to our volunteers – many have been involved since the beginning of the project and, since the Society was incorporated. This is deplorable.

b. Buck Creek Canfor Hatchery and Nature Centre (A Rocha Canada)

- Echo the concerns above about the vacant Community Advisor position in Smithers. There is capacity pressure on the current Smithers staff with no CA. We appreciate how the staff have stepped up to make sure we are supported.
- Concerned about the impact of PSSI funding ending. We've greatly benefited from the expertise of new DFO support biologist/technician staff.

2. Any positive things that are directly related to DFO

a. Chicago Cr Community Environmental Enhancement Society

- We are grateful for our continued PIP grant as that allows us to conduct the work we do.

b. Buck Creek Canfor Hatchery and Nature Centre (A Rocha)

- Have benefited greatly from new DFO Support Biologist Jody Atkinson. Her experience with hatchery recirculation systems has led to us making upgrades to our system and has improved our water quality awareness and knowledge. Also appreciate support from Sandy Devcic and funding boosts from DFO to make upgrades possible.

- Grateful for support from Restoration staff Natalie Newman and Aidan Clark in our fry salvage efforts last summer. They also continue to be involved with habitat restoration planning in our watershed.

3. Any things coming up that DFO should know about

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

5. A general update of what has been happening with your society that you would like to share

a. Chicago Cr Community Environmental Enhancement Society

- Our Society continues to conduct stock assessment programs by counting pink and coho adults at the Mission Creek fish fence and we move coho spawners upstream of an impassable culvert located on Highway 16.
- We are conducting a juvenile assessment for the second time this summer – early fall. We are participating in juvenile over-wintering trapping and monitoring.
- We continue to be the eyes and ears in the Mission Cr watershed and, we continue to liaise and work with land and water use impactors such as CN Rail, District of New Hazelton and local, small operation forestry companies who impact the headwaters of the Mission Cr watershed.
- We assist DFO-SEP with the Stream to Sea Program throughout the year.

b. Buck Creek Canfor Hatchery and Nature Centre

- We continue with our target of raising and releasing 10,000 coho fry from the Upper Bulkley stock each year, and continue to have good community volunteer engagement for this. This fall we collected 9,900 eggs.
- Beginning in summer of 2024 worked with DFO Stock Assessment on piloting a chinook spawner dead pitch program on the Upper Bulkley. Upper Bulkley chinook enhancement at Toboggan Creek has been paused for now, so we have a few years to try assess the status of this population and get rates of hatchery vs wild. The dead pitch was very challenging this past summer with low, warm water conditions. We only found 40 live adults and only 5 dead prespawn (mix of male&female) to collect heads from.
- The Upper Bulkley has really been struggling with the drought, low water and warm water conditions the last few years.
- Chinook access to cooler water streams such as McQuarrie and Richfield is a concern. In connection with that we're trying to think of ways the chinook can have better success. Over the last couple years we've been

working with the Office of the Wet'suwet'en who received a BCSRIF grant for habitat restoration in the Upper Bulkley Watershed, the DFO Restoration team is part of this as well along with some consultants and local landowners. This has been a really good partnership and we're working on how to prioritize actions for restoring habitat for salmon in the watershed.