

Round table Report
June 2024 SEHAB meeting
SEHAB Rep Stephanie Cottell, South 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
2. Any positive things that are directly related to DFO
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.

Rep. Report

1.
 - Community groups are seeking training on how to respond to fish kills. There is a lot of planning happening around monitoring trapped fry and fish mortality in the watershed. DFO involvement and expertise is greatly appreciated
 - Groups Advocating for fishing closer Dec 1-April 1 on upper Cowichan River
 - Trout numbers are down in the Cowichan (sunscreen? Algae?)
2. Local DFO staff are great to work with!
3. Local festivals and events, for example Cowichan River Day this September.
Quw'utsun Sta'lo' Skweyul, Cowichan River Day, Sept. 22, 2024
 - Tables/Events Booked
 - Tzinquaw Dancers
 - DFO will be there with an inflatable salmon. They will be doing fish painting and fish life cycle work
 - Project 84,000
5. Who is responsible for what, who to contact for what type of issue is still an area of frustration.

Group reports

Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable input

Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society

- Festival: July 20th

- The main project is the festival this summer in Saywell park in the Town of Lake Cowichan. Invitations are going out to various groups right now as we speak. I think some have gone out. I am not on that committee but they report to me they are going out around now. If not, they will be going out in the next week or ten days. This is celebrating the watershed on July the 20th.
- Project 84, 000 is about honouring a loss of the steelhead, cutthroat, and lake trout that passed in Quw'utsun Sta'lo' due to conditions of low flow, PH, and sewage outflow.
- Letter Writing Campaign
 - We are supporting Joe and Friends of the Cowichan to prohibit fishing in the upper river from December 1st to April 1st. There are a few other items going on, but nothing too major.

Friends of the Cowichan

Fry Salvage and Monitoring

- It is a busy time in the upper river to be gathering fry. It is at 17 cms. We have been monitoring it.
- Numbers of Trout are Down Significantly.
 - I can gauge how many trout there are based on the number of rises (the number of times that a trout goes up and grabs a fish). There are not $\frac{1}{3}$ of the amount of rises that there should be, which indicates that numbers of trout are down significantly.
 - Some thoughts we have might be is sunscreen impacting the fish. Other thoughts are the algae on the bottom of the river being impacted.
 - Parker: Could it be related to the dismal chum salmon over the last few years.
- Advocacy on Closures in the Upper River
 - We are hoping to have river closures in the upper Quw'utsun Sta'lo' from December 1st to April 1st. We are still working on this. The impacts to the fish due to the anglers and guides in this time period is significant.

Xwulqw'selu Connections

- We are part of a research project where we are inviting community members to deepen connections with the Xwulqw'selu Sta'lo'.
- Part of my role is making and growing more connections. I have mentioned a few things in previous meetings that I can bring updates on. One is I circulated a position for a Field Researcher Assistant. We are working with Heather Magnusson.
- Stth'lhnamut sqw'ululm (First Salmon Ceremony)
 - About 100 people attended.
 - We did dogwood staking with Ken Elliot, Project 84,000 with Jennifer Shepherd and Julie Brayden, and Hul'q'umi'num language classes with T'uwahwiye'.
- Project 84, 000
 - We will be doing fish rubbings in the July meeting for CSRT.

- We will also be presenting in July.

Sidney Anglers

- Annual Fundraiser was a big success. The fundraiser was fully subscribed. 100% of the proceeds are to go to support salmon enhancement projects. Habitat restoration on the Cowichan is a priority and we are open to requests for funds.

Cowichan Watershed Board, Quw'utsun Cultural Connections

- Fish Kill Workshops
 - Workshops with Cowichan Tribes, CVRD, and people from the province will be . We are asking what do we need to monitor in 2024 and where do we need to monitor this. What is the information we need to gather so we know to act and reduce the chance of another fish kill. In the weeks that have gone by between the last workshop and this one, there have been flurries of phone calls and meetings. Everyone has come together in a way, pooling knowledge. I would say we are 98 percent there for having a strong monitoring plan for this year. There is a bit more cash needed and extra bodies, and we are on our way to filling those gaps. We are doing this monitoring, when a certain parameter gets to the yellow light - whether temperature, or phosphorous levels, who takes what action when so we don't get up to that red level. I am very positive that everyone is bringing their best to the table. It is an amazing community. There is a strong coming together of people all on the same page. It is giving me a feeling of optimism that we will be prepared for this year.

Sunny Mizushima (DFO, Program Manager, Southeast Vancouver Island)

- Hatchery
 - Fish will be coated and wire tagged, some will be in an early release group others in a late release group. Others will be tagged for stock assessment as well.
- Cowichan River Day
 - I am happy to join as a DFO support person.

Cowichan Tribes Land Department

- Kim Lagamodiére Marine Team Outreach Update
 - Marine Team is doing outreach with youth to provide opportunities for marine monitoring. The S-hwuhhwa'us Thi'lut Kw'atl'kwa (Thunderbird Protecting the Ocean) marine team has been meeting with students from Cowichan Middle School and the environmental program at Cowichan Secondary on the beaches at Cowichan Bay. Students are learning about the marine team and using binoculars to collect data. Middle school students are joining the crew this week to do water monitoring. They are seeking to do connections with youth.
- European Green Crab Monitoring

- They started monitoring a month ago. They have not found green crabs, but they have found hairy shore crabs, which are not invasive. The team is expanding their sites, and the facebook page has a map of sampling locations.
- 2024 Youth-Led Marine Topics Forum (Partnership with Georgia Strait Alliance)
 - They are working on a marine vision for the territory. They are looking to hire youth supporting the planning. The forum is a place for sharing and learning in Cowichan territory and they are looking to engage youth from other nations.
- Year Six Study on the Impact of Log Booms
 - For more than 100 years, the log booms have littered the sea bed, causing anoxic zones, and causing damage to sea grass and forage fish. They also facilitate steel predation and a rise in the number of harbour seals. Subject to approval of leadership, staff are working with PSF and other foundations on the report, which will outline impacts of log booms in the estuaries. Hakai is also planning to publish an article on this, subject to approval on leadership.

Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre

- Fully Booked School Groups
 - We have fairly fully booked school groups coming this spring.

Cowichan Watershed Board

- Weir
 - The weir is moving along and I think everyone here is familiar with where we are at. The watershed board has been meeting with each of the partners. Now that funding is secured, the next step is to address licensing and liability questions: how are decisions made and ownership handled between the partners?
- Xwulqw'selu Low Flow Working Group is hosting its annual Koksilah Low Flow
- Community Info Session (Zoom) April 29th. Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/koksilah-community-info-session-tickets-876252483767?aff=oddtcreator>.
- Cowichan River Clean Up
 - Likely August 24 or 25, at Little Big House, pending Cowichan Tribes invitation.
- Next CWB meeting is April 29th at Siem Lelum Gym.

Genevieve Singleton, Polster Environmental and CSRT Co-chair

River Day 2024- co-hosting with Cowichan Tribes

Stream of Dreams <https://www.streamofdreams.org/>. Working with Ally Roberts, long time Goldstream Nature House ED and now Salmon in Schools, DFO. Many of you will know of Stream of Dreams project by the wooden salmon swimming on school fences. This is a fantastic salmon education programme empowering children to take care of salmon habitat. In the last two weeks Ally and I engaged with Alix Aitken and Quw'utsun Smuneem Schools/ Take a drive by and check it out! In the summer we will be doing some programmes in the long lineups in ferry terminals to engage folks as they wait!

- In March the Salmon and The Forest Team presented three programmes to schools based at Cowichan Hatchery and Ken Elliott's Native Plant Nursery. Philomena Willians, Elder, Ken Eillott, Ken's Native Plant Nursery, JR Elliott and team at Cowichan Hatchery, Heather Wright, DFO Community Advisor and staff and Genevieve, Nature interpreter, and the Cowichan Community Land Trust have been providing local salmon focused education with an indigenous lens in November 2023 and March and April 2024 to Cowichan valley children. We hope to find more funding to provide these programmes in the fall of 2204. Feedback has been very positive.

Thetis Island Nature Conservancy

- Forage fish sampling continues and a new citizen science group has been trained to monitor for the European Green Crab